LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 30
SEPTEMBER 2019
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1 OF 2 COLLECTOR'S EDITION COVERS

LIAM & NOEL GALLAGHER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MICHAEL SPENCER JONES

PIXIES

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40 ALBUMS YOU NEED TO OWN

THE MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS

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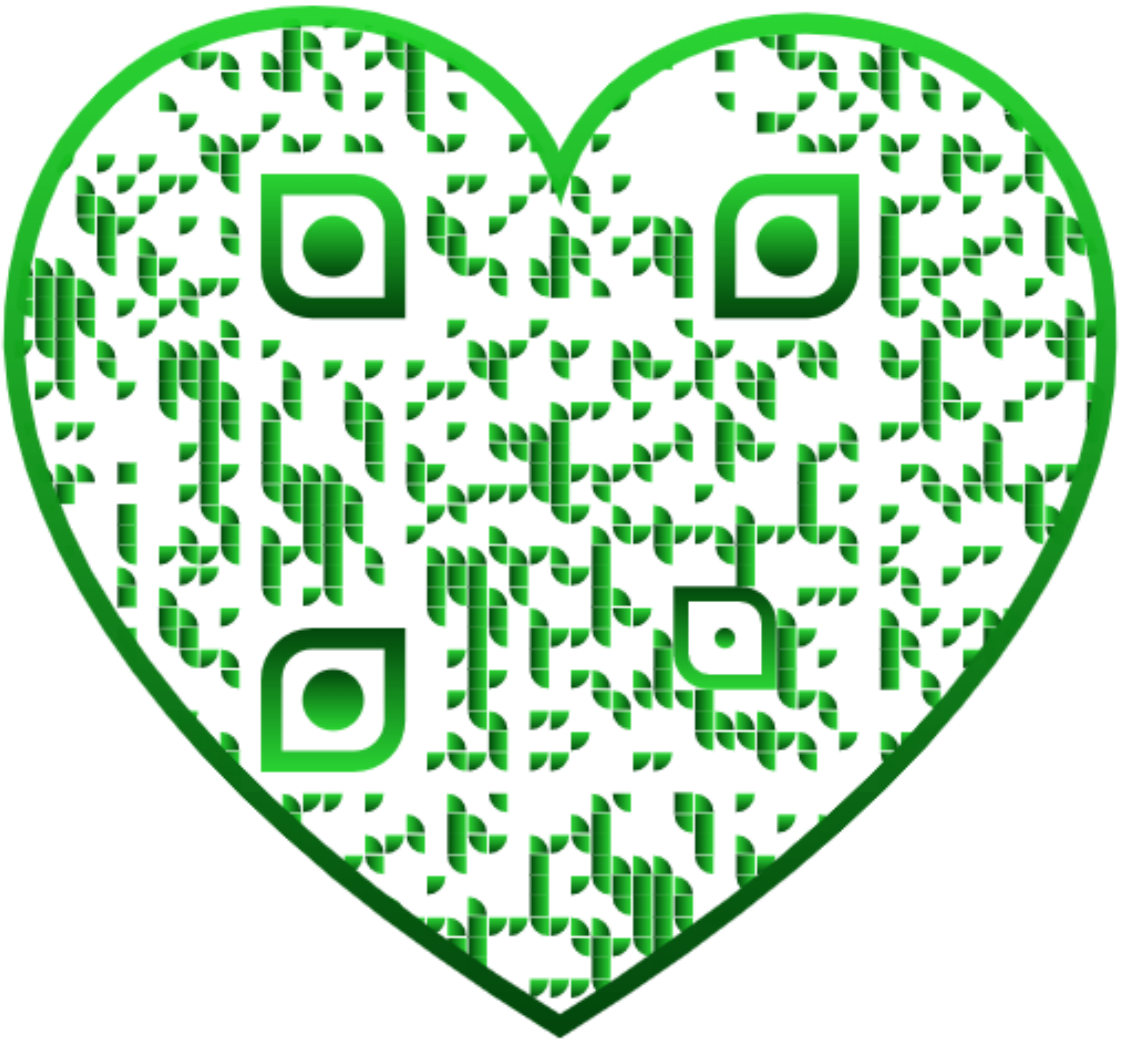
OASIS

DEFINITELY MAYBE AT 25 "THEY WERE GREAT DAYS, FULL OF LIFE… A BAND READY TO EXPLODE"
THE UNTOLD STORY OF ONE OF THE GREATEST EVER DEBUT ALBUMS

55 NEW REVIEWS!

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND, EZRA FURMAN, FIONN REGAN, THOM YORKE, STEREOLAB, RIDE, SLEATER-KINNEY
+ THE LATEST HI-FI GEAR



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Welcome...

Back in August 1994, in the wake of the chaotic, violent scenes that marred the tour to celebrate the looming release of Oasis' debut album, Noel Gallagher made a typically self-assured prediction. After a riotous misadventure of broken bones and ugly recriminations that saw the band branded "English Scum" by a Swedish newspaper, Oasis' man with the masterplan had the presence of mind to distance himself from the 'English hooligan on holiday' scenes and claim: "In 20 years' time, *Definitely Maybe* will still be in the shops. In 20 years' time people will buy the album and listen to it for what it is. They won't listen to it because we were rock 'n' roll or something like that. That's what matters."

Definitely Maybe was for many of us in 1994 the ultimate gateway drug

Well, 25 years have now elapsed, and *Definitely Maybe* is still an ubiquitous presence in record shops and album charts. Quite apart from the 7 million sales, and the countless guitar bands inspired into action by Oasis' blend of smart musical magpie tendencies and extreme self confidence, *Definitely Maybe* was for many of us who were 'the right age' in 1994, the ultimate gateway drug. A swaggering, visceral record in its own right, it kickstarted the record collecting habits of so many British teenagers (myself included).

In this issue's cover feature, we take you inside the making of one of the greatest ever debut albums. The man who signed Oasis, Alan McGee; the album's producer, Mark Coyle, and engineer Anjali Dutt are among those who help to unravel the story of *Definitely Maybe* this month. We've also enlisted Michael Spencer Jones to talk us through shooting the album's cover, as well as the artwork for *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* and *Be Here Now*. Michael has provided the striking images of Liam and Noel for our pair of special collector's covers, too.

In other news this month, John Earls sits down in a dark room with Black Francis to hear how the reinvigorated Pixies have made one of their best records yet in *Beneath The Eyrie* and King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard take a rare break from making albums to talk about their new one – the thrash metal behemoth *Infest The Rats' Nest*. We also meet one of 2019's most exciting new bands, WH Lung, fresh from an incendiary festival performance in a Devon field, and delve deep into the history of Sub Pop, the Seattle label that did so much to put grunge on the musical map.

As you're reading this page, *Long Live Vinyl* has hit the 30-issue mark. Somehow in this world of austerity, digital streaming and the long-predicted death of print journalism we're still here, and vinyl is still thriving. We'll do our best to continue to celebrate it in all its forms.

Thanks for reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

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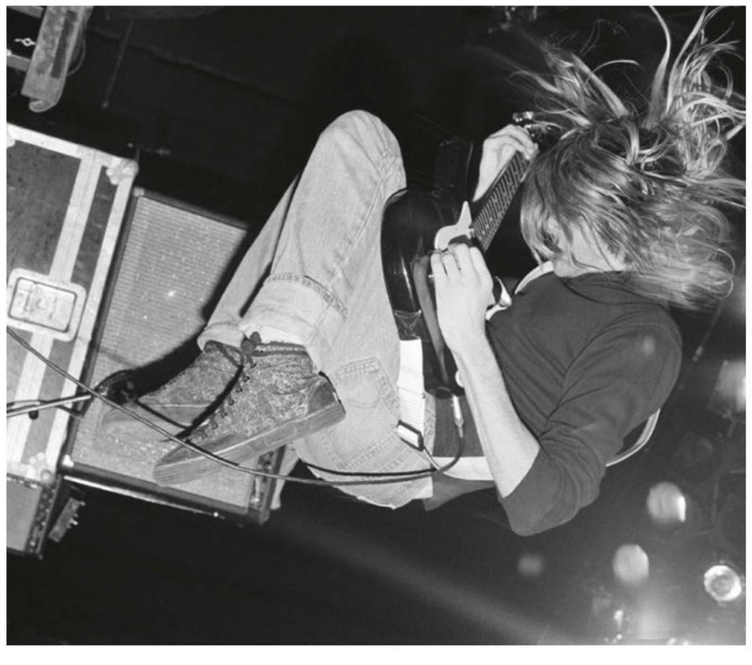
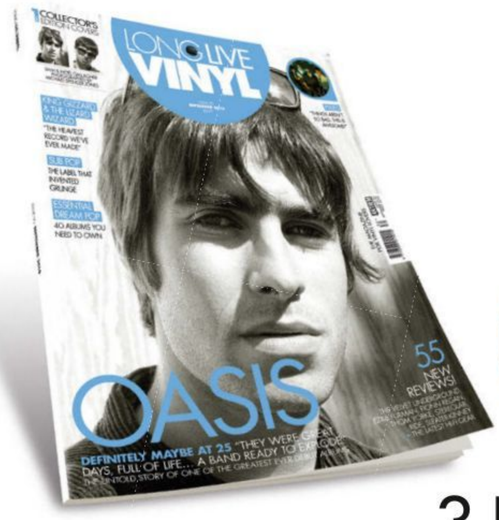
MTTDO
INTEGRATED TURNTABLE



TALKING HEADS
FEAR OF MUSIC

LONG LIVE VINYL



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Definitely Maybe, the incendiary debut from Oasis, reaches 25. It's just rock 'n' roll

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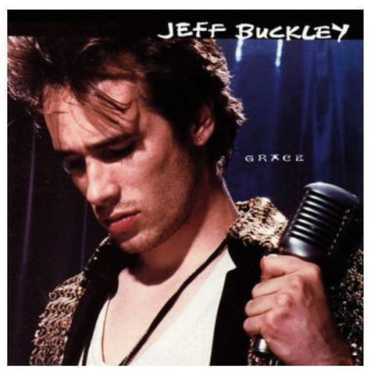
LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite records from 1994

GARY WALKER
His 'N' Hers
Pulp

GARY TIPP
Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain
Pavement



STEVE HARNELL
Grace
Jeff Buckley

ANDY McGREGOR
Superunknown
Soundgarden

IAN PEEL
7 Seconds
Youssou N'Dour
& Neneh Cherry

Meet our expert contributors…

SIMON RAYMONDE
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

JOHN EARLS
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He also writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

TERI SACCONE
A veteran music journalist who grew up in New York, Teri voraciously pored over album sleeves as a child, studying studio and songwriting credits. Later, she was sucked into the vortex of the music industry while still at university. A sometimes beauty and fashion writer, besides the aural wonders of vinyl, she loves the aesthetics of album design and artwork.

JONATHAN WRIGHT
Jonathan began writing about music in the late 80s. He's interviewed such singular talents as Shaun Ryder, Edwyn Collins and Richey Edwards. He's written for *The Guardian*, *Classic Pop* and many others. Jonathan edited *Adventure Rocketship! Let's All Go To The Science Fiction Disco*, a book of essays about the interface between geek culture and music.

PETE PAPHIDES
Pete bought his first record at the age of nine and has been a vinyl obsessive ever since, while writing for *Melody Maker*, *Q*, *Mojo*, *Time Out*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. He is one of the UK's best known music journalists and has also written and presented documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. You can catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm.

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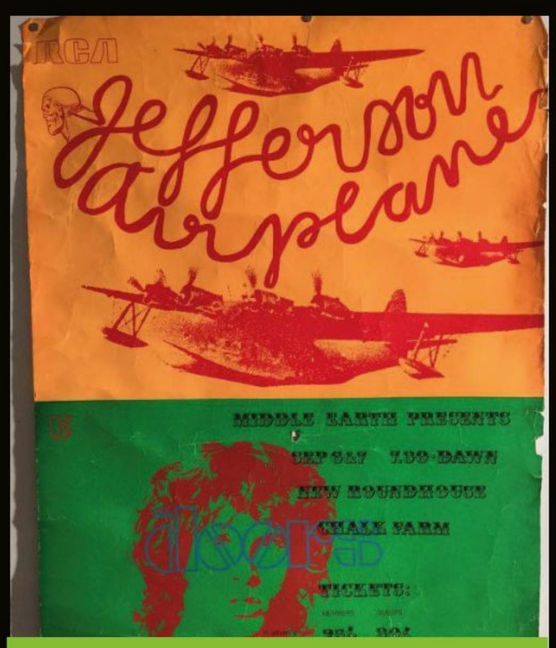

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On the record

Editions Of You

Dinked is a powerhouse collective of indie record shops complete with its own series of collectable new releases

Dinked is a collective of like-minded record shops run by Natasha Youngs of Resident in Brighton, Rupert Morrison of Drift Records, Totnes and Spencer Hickman of Transmission in Margate. We took time out to quiz them about their intentions.

What is Dinked?
"We are a collective of independent record shops from all over the UK, working together as a proactive alliance. We started out chatting among a small group of us who have become record shop friends over the years, but it soon became apparent we wanted to expand the alliance to include more indies across the country. So, before the first exclusive Dinked release, we invited a wider group of record shop friends to join the Dinked family, those who stock and promote new music. Shops with a fresh, innovative and modern approach to selling music."

Why did you form?
"For lots of reasons. It's a way of supporting labels that we work with every day in a more meaningful way, helping them to get releases noticed among all the noise. Whether that's about celebrating artists that we have traditionally done well with as indie shops (Kurt Vile, Sebadoh, Cate Le Bon, Kevin Morby, Blanck Mass), raising the profile of artists that we have previously supported (Snapped Ankles, Toy, Here Lies Man, Jesca Hoop) or helping to promote new acts (You Tell Me, W.H. Lung, Tropical Fuck Storm, BABii). It's also about building on what Record Store Day started but hasn't seen through to the extent that we would have liked. RSD has allowed us to work together on a more united front, but only really for that one day a year. It has never achieved its original aim of bringing shops together all year round. We saw that as a missed opportunity and were keen to find a way of addressing this."

What are Dinked Editions?
"They are exclusive special editions of new-release albums that we are excited to promote. The Dinked founders work with the label and the artist to come up with a package we think will appeal to fans. We help to curate beautiful editions of albums we love with alternate sleeves, screen printed editions, different colourways, additional artwork, accompanying merch, signed and numbered versions. You can find details of all of the editions so far at www.dinkededition.co.uk."

Is there a dialogue between labels and shops?
"Yes, in various ways. More and more labels are in direct contact with more and more shops, helping to keep us up to date with release info, campaigns, album promos… there's also a new, quarterly meeting between AIM members and indie record shops, but separately to the Dinked alliance. Labels and record shops face so many of the same issues that it makes sense that we keep the conversation flowing."

Discogs TRENDING CHART

THE TOP 10 TRENDING VINYL RELEASES FROM THE DISCOGS COMMUNITY THIS MONTH

10 *The Division Bell*
Pink Floyd

9 *Claustro/State Forest*
Burial

8 *Cornbread*
Lee Morgan

7 *Gospel Train*
Sister Rosetta Tharpe

6 *Schlagenheim*
Black Midi

5 *Gold & Grey*
Baroness

4 *Step Back In Time*
Kylie Minogue

3 *Let's Rock*
The Black Keys

2 *Western Stars*
Bruce Springsteen

1 *Help Us Stranger*
The Raconteurs

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

JULY 2019

10 *Help Us Stranger*
The Raconteurs

9 *Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent*
Lewis Capaldi

8 *Greatest Hits*
Spice Girls

7 *Let's Rock*
The Black Keys

6 *Doom Days*
Bastille

5 *Greatest Hits*
Queen

4 *Madame X*
Madonna

3 *Step Back In Time*
Kylie Minogue

2 *Western Stars*
Bruce Springsteen

1 *Unknown Pleasures*
Joy Division

END OF THE ROAD FESTIVAL

£192

endoftheroadfestival.com

Small, friendly and lovingly curated by Simon Taffe, End Of The Road is one of our favourite festivals. This year's highlights include Low, Spiritualized, Jarvis Cocker, Courtney Barnett and Metronomy. Held in the beautiful Larmer Tree Gardens, there were still a few tickets left as we went to press.

BEGIN THE BEGIN: R.E.M.'S EARLY YEARS

£12 *versechorus.com*

Author Robert Dean Lurie's document of the early years of Athens, Georgia's finest is billed as the first biography since they disbanded in 2011. Featuring interviews with some of the key figures in R.E.M.'s astonishing rise, it also focuses on the importance of Southern culture and the Georgia music scene to the band.

PRO-JECT X1 TURNTABLE

£599 *project-audio.com*

Pro-Ject unveiled its new turntable range at the Bristol Hi-Fi Show, and they're about to hit the shops, with the "affordable audiophile" X1 catching our eye. It's essentially an update on the classic Pro-Ject 1 deck. Also in the range are the entry-level T1, the X2 and The Classic Evo.

The Selecter

Long Live Vinyl's essential picks for the month ahead

NIKE AIR MAX 90 TRAINERS

£120

nike.com

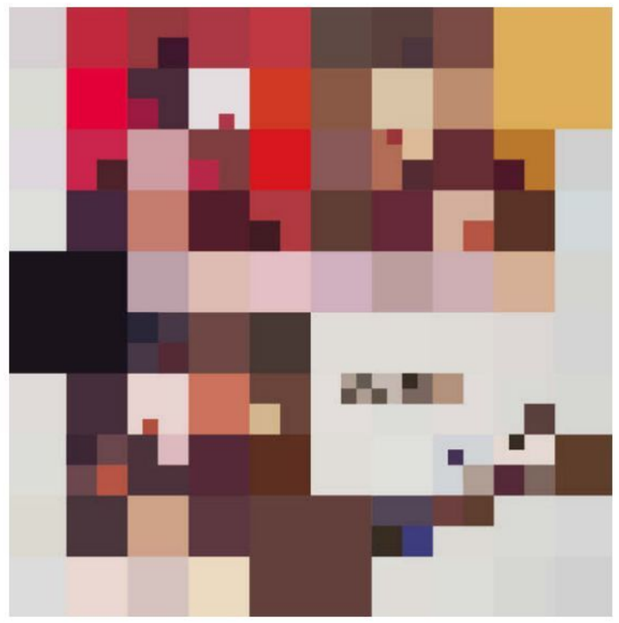
A clever retro-futuristic design or a cynical attempt to tap into analogue culture? Either way, these vinyl-themed trainers are pretty cool, following the US company's mixtape-inspired shoe, which had 'Side A' and 'Side B' versions. The new Air Max 90 features a black vinyl upper with an 'ice blue' sole and red detail and specially designed miniature-vinyl Nike logos on each tongue.

YELLOW MAGIC ORCHESTRA BOXSET REISSUES

Various

lightintheattic.net

Sony Japan has launched a mother lode of Yellow Magic Orchestra reissues, available as standard and boxset versions. The boxsets covering the Japanese band's peak years from 1978-1981 sport (deliberately) pixelated covers, unseen photos and liner notes.



STAY FREE: THE STORY OF THE CLASH

Free

Spotify

Narrated by Public Enemy's Chuck D, *Stay Free* is highly addictive listening, telling the story of The Clash's ascent from humble West London roots to fame over eight parts. Chuck D proves to be a natural narrator, noting "the band burned so brightly, they had to burn out". In the absence of a vinyl version, it's all available to stream free over Spotify.

Work In Progress

CASPER CLAUSEN, EFTERKLANG

ALTID SAMMEN **4AD** 20 SEPTEMBER

Our new album is... Called *Altid Sammen,* it's our fifth studio album, and the first one in seven years. We've been spending the past years making another band, Liima, and opening a radio station: The Lake Radio. Now we're here again, the three of us as Efterklang with a bag of new songs, and we're happy to be together again.

The sessions were... Super deluxe, we never had the chance to record an album in this fashion, with such beautiful studios and fantastic musicians. It was an inspiring journey, with more freedom and intuition involved than on any previous Efterklang album. Like letting a garden grow wild and slowly trimming it to its essential. It's a filtering process that is essentially what Efterklang is, the three of us going on a journey together and gathering some kind of knowledge.

We worked with... A baroque ensemble from Antwerp called B.O.X. They were the first we met on this journey. It all started with us going to Antwerp, making songs and playing them with these old baroque instruments; viola da gamba, cornettos, a pipe organ and many more. Afterwards, we added other instruments, like an Icelandic choir (Klidur), piano from Kjartan Sveinsson (ex Sigur Rós), Sir Was, Indre and Bert from Granvat, and many more.

We used... To rehearse next to 10 metal bands, in our hometown Sønderborg. At the time, we made music that was heavily inspired by the music we were listening to, like a bad copy, but I learned how to ash a cigarette in my hand during the monthly band meetings with all the metalheads.

We were inspired... By the horizon and the river Tejo here in Lisbon where I live. That's where we wrote the first songs for *Altid Sammen*, in my studio on the other side of the river. The tide coming and going, the fishermen with their fishing poles: maybe they are meditating or running away from their wives, we are still wondering.

We learnt... That there is only one way forward and it's to accept our past and look ahead, together. Essentially, what it is to make music in Efterklang is trying to make something that excites us, even after 20 years of friendship.

Playing these songs live... Is what we love to do. It's a state of mind that I love so much, and it's a privilege to meet all the people that are listening to our music. We're very lucky! The new songs have a different nature, that feels pretty clear when we perform them live. They are born out of an acoustic space and a togetherness, so playing them live together with other instruments and approaches is much easier than our older songs. We can't wait to go on tour with *Altid Sammen* during the next year.

You'd be surprised to know that...
I sing in Danish for the first time. In fact, the whole album is sung in Danish. The idea appeared while working with B.O.X. in Antwerp, which is the Flemish part of Belgium. They kind of speak a strangely twisted, although familiar language to our language. It's a strange connection. It felt exciting and appropriating to sing in Danish for some reason. To even find words that would work in both languages, like the album title *Altid Sammen,* for example.

Lost Shops

#3 DADDY KOOL

Initially tucked away on Hanway Street, minutes from Tottenham Court Road Station, Daddy Kool existed for three decades as the West End's only reggae shop. Founder Steve Barrow was working for All Change Records in Hanway Street in 1974 when he got the offer to take over the shop. "I met Keith Stone," recalls Barrow, "who wanted to get into the music biz, and said to him, 'We could turn this into a reggae shop!' Keith borrowed the money off his mother to buy the lease. We opened Daddy Kool in October 1975."

Daddy Kool immediately made its mark and every Jamaican musician who landed in London dropped by. "Until we started Daddy Kool, reggae shops were small, local," states Barrow. "We were getting stock from all around London: Brixton, Brockley, New Cross, Peckham, the shops there were often pressing stuff."

As Daddy Kool gathered heat, the partnership grew frosty. Barrow left, working in Honest Jon's before launching Blood & Fire, the pioneering reggae reissue label. Daddy Kool shifted to Dean Street and then onto Berwick Street. I occasionally ventured into the latter, admiring the myriad 45s hanging on the wall. Daddy Kool eventually closed its doors, leaving the West End bereft of Jamaican music.

Garth Cartwright

RASMUS WENG KARLSEN

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

All Families Are Psychotic. A brilliant novel by Douglas Coupland, and Simon feels no shame pilfering it as a heading for this piece, as Coupland himself borrowed a Smiths song title for his book *Girlfriend In A Coma*

All of us have relatives who we avoid at all costs, who terrify us, leaving us to wonder why we should ever have to spend even a second with them just because they happen to marry a half-sister of our evil third cousin. Yet, this particular tale draws a more melodious musical line from Ivor Raymonde through his two sons to my two sons, and thankfully shows no sign of ending soon. I've written here before about my father Ivor and his musical legacy, and my own exploits over the last 35 years or so are well-documented, but trust me this is no 'family business' where a job for life exists for offspring.

Perhaps all those weekend visits to my mum throughout the 80s and 90s as I was starting out as a musician, where after a few too many sherries she'd quietly opine in the kitchen away from the ears of others "Why don't you become an estate agent Simon, they make a good living!", had more of an effect than I realised.

The slow drip of jaundice, her own scars of watching dad's sad slow decline and the work drying up before his premature death in 1990, no doubt resurfacing. So when I finally had children of my own, I consciously avoided pushing them towards music just because I happened to be obsessed about it. All that time away from home touring with Cocteau Twins also put the kibosh on my own marriage, so in the years that followed the divorce, I didn't feel that I was a particularly good advert for a 'job working in music'.

Stan and Will are only a year and a half apart, and thankfully they seemed way more interested in sport, Tamagotchi, Nintendo and Top Trumps to be taking any interest in music. I naturally showed my utter disdain for *The X Factor* when it came on TV at the weekends, but I suppose they soon realised that wasn't anything to do with music either. But things always change, especially when children become teenagers. Stan at the age of 15 was downloading an unholy number of songs for free on Limewire, and at one point he easily had more tracks in his iTunes Player than I did. I figured if he was doing it, then every 15-year-old in the world was doing it, and surely the industry was a year or two away from apocalypse. The feared armageddon didn't materialise, but Spotify did.

Next, he became totally devoted to drum 'n' bass, the underground stuff. I was just amazed that drum 'n' bass was still thriving. I showed him my Goldie and Alex Reece CDs in solidarity, but I don't think he was that impressed. But as he approached 20, I noticed our tastes were beginning to converge. He genuinely loved a lot of the music I was signing and he was introducing me to a lot of new sounds.

It was tempting to offer him a job at Bella Union straight out of school and stretch this very thin line of 'family business' out a bit longer, or even help him with contacts, but it just felt too easy and I wanted him to find the path himself. Or not. It's sometimes hard to know with children of divorced parents whether their apparent enthusiasm for something we would do in our rare time together was out of pity or genuine love.

"Why don't you become an estate agent Simon, they make good money"

Another of our joint passions was cricket, and at 18 Stan got a job in a sports shop, worked solidly for a couple of years and saved up a few grand while still living at home with his mum. Then, one day, he handed in his notice and went off travelling with friends. I missed him terribly, but I couldn't have been happier that he was off the PlayStation-pub-PlayStation-bed routine. He stayed away for two years. After nine months hiking across Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, he decided to spend his last few hundred pounds on getting down to Australia. Within two days, he'd managed to get a paid internship at a label, again nowt to do with me, and ended up staying for another year.

His friends came home to England and he travelled on alone to India for another six months. When he returned, his love for music continued to grow and I was thrilled when he got a job at Rough Trade East, not just because my own first job was working in a record shop, but it seems such a perfect entry point for someone who is like a sponge for new music. Within a year, he'd set up his own label Opposite Number, initially with the idea to release Australian bands he loved who had no UK setup. His roster is already eclectic and strong, and while I would have warned anyone against entering the label scene in the last few years of falling sales, I know how much he loves his music; and when you love what you do, there really isn't much that needs saying. Follow your heart, trust your guts and be lucky.

The Big Question

Addressing Vinyl's Most Pressing Issues

Does the 7-inch single have a future?

Back in the day it was popular music's most magical artefact, nowadays the 45 looks to be on the verge of extinction

There's no doubting that vinyl's resurgence has been great for the album format, as 11 years of consecutive growth reliably informs us. The revival has not been so kind to the 7-inch single which, to be frank, is struggling.

Starting with Phil Leigh, the founder of online retailer Norman Records, we asked a number of industry insiders for their take. When questioned about the immediate challenge for the format, Phil wasn't in the mood to tip-toe around the subject. "Extinction! Most 7"s these days retail for between £8-15. That's a lot to pay for essentially two tracks. We sell nowhere near as many as we used to. Sales have plummeted over the last few years due to the cost and also not as many are being made."

Another retailer, this time of the bricks and mortar variety, Tony Boothroyd at Vinyl Tap in Huddersfield reluctantly confirms Phil's worst fears, but isn't ready to let go just yet. "It's noticeable over the last few years that we get offered fewer and fewer 7" singles on the new-release order forms. When I was a kid buying records for the first time, it was 7" singles I started with. It had to be an amazing album for me to shell out that amount of cash, and so singles were very important. I've spoken to record company reps about this and they say it's not viable financially, apart from select releases. The one thing I do know for sure is that we sell a lot of second-hand 7" singles every day; and that's a message from customers that they really like this format. Maybe the record companies are missing a trick?"

Steve Courtnell of Southsea's Pie And Vinyl sees price as a major issue. "7-inch records are on average £7 to £9 each, while an album is £16 to £22. You get so much more for your money with an LP. With the reincarnation of the vinyl-only DJ, we do see people picking up 45s to play out, but it's got to be a proper banger."

This time last year, in an interview, we asked Rough Trade's Geoff Travis what his hopes for the format were. He went all Zen on us, but we enjoyed his answer: "The 7" single does have a future. Whether it's in the jukebox of your mind or on the turntable of your record player, or in the DJ booth at a backroom in a pub, it's explosive, concise and contains the very essence of rock 'n' roll. From *Rave On* by Buddy Holly, through *Paperback Writer* by The Beatles, through *Hand In Glove* by The Smiths, through *Gangsters* by The Specials to the present day. It is pure nuclear fission in a piece of plastic."

Rich Walker, Strategic Director at Beggars Group/4AD, echoes the statement a bit more prosaically. "Without doubt they have a future. Their novelty diminishes somewhat when they're getting close to £10 to buy, though. They'd definitely be in better health if they were more throwaway."

The perceived wisdom seems to be that the only way for the format to survive is for singles to be marketed squarely at collectors. Something that a glance at the best-selling vinyl singles of 2019 so far quickly backs up, with New Order (*Ceremony*), David Bowie (*Boys Keep Swinging*), Kate Bush (*Cloudbusting*) and The Rolling Stones (*She's A Rainbow*) all present in the Top 20.

So let's not write off the 7-inch single just yet, but we're afraid that a new golden age isn't getting any closer to the horizon.

The 7-inch single format can't afford to rest on past glories

The Completist

PETE PAPHIDES

With their snipped-off corners and shop stickers, records have the power to trigger memories. Go tell that to the daytime TV decluttering guru

On his 1970 album *Beware Of The Beautiful Stranger*, with lyrics written by a young Clive James, Pete Atkin sings, "Touch has a memory/ Better than the other senses." Today, I hold that record into the light and I'm transported to the day I first happened upon it. It's suddenly eight months ago – I'm at Kingbee Records in Chorlton, having dropped off my kids at Manchester MEN Arena where they're off to see The 1975. To stare at its sleeve is to remember the journey up from London; the two hours in a record shop with barely a soul in the world knowing where I am; the catnapping in a Manchester car park that evening as I wait for my kids to get in the car sweaty from an incredible gig; and the effusive chatter of the drive back to London, slowly fading into teenage slumber.

Touch does indeed have a memory. The £3.95 sticker on the copy of *The Notorious Byrd Brothers,* bought on my first trip to Hag's Record Shop in Lampeter, propels me back to the shop whose existence probably made the difference between me staying at university there and giving up after one term. The corner snipped off the sleeve of Talk Talk's *Mirror Man* catapults me to the Woolworths on Birmingham New Street with a box of reduced singles sitting on the countertop. It's December 1982. I've never heard Talk Talk, but I've read a piece in the local paper about how they're set to follow in the footsteps of label mates Duran Duran. I take it home and realise that actually this doesn't sound like the work of mainstream pop contenders. It's far too interesting for that, its rising, anguished strings portending the increasingly astounding deviations of their future releases.

This is why I'm fine with snipped-off corners. Ditto stickers. Some collectors go to great pains to remove the stickers from their acquisitions, but surely if you see your collection as a vast lifelong, three-dimensional diary, it makes no sense to do that. The stickers on my Pulp records hint at the group's rise to glory from the most unpromising of beginnings. The first Pulp record I bought was an EP called *Dogs Are Everywhere* with money given to me for my 17th birthday. This being 1986, Pulp weren't even popular among indie puritans. Their record sales struggled to exceed triple figures. The yellow sticker on my purchase has a price and a date on it – Virgin price stickers always featured the date on which the record was stocked. Then just below it is another one with a much cheaper price on it, telling you that *Dogs Are Everywhere* sat there unloved for eight months before I took a chance on it.

Stickers on my ensuing Pulp purchases trace an arc that rises from failure to success and then, beyond success, collectability. The Record & Tape Exchange imprint on the 12-inch of *They Suffocate At Night* marks my discovery that there was a shop in London full of cheap records offloaded there by music journalists who'd had them sent for free. Record & Tape Exchange stickers featured a six-square grid onto which a 'starter' price was written and then if the record hadn't shifted, that price would be crossed out and a cheaper price scrawled in the next square. This one had descended all the way from £2.50 to 50p. Then there's my seven-inch of *Disco 2000*, with a small 99p sticker on it. But this time, it's not because the shop can't shift it. It's because post-Glasto 1995, Jarvis Cocker is Britain's most talked-about pop star. Pulp's label Island is trying to boost their first-week sales and ensure a Top 10 placing. Finally, there's the £69.99 sticker on my copy of Pulp's final album, *We Love Life* (from Flashback Records in Crouch End). What does that sticker tell you? It tells you that a lot more people like Pulp than they did when the idea of Jarvis Cocker turning into a national treasure was as likely as that of Nookie Bear becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As I write this, I'm sitting in a cafe in North London. Directly opposite is the local Oxfam shop where last week I bought a copy of Frankie Miller's 1972 debut *Once In A Blue Moon* – a folksy rhythm & blues collection similar in sound to what Rod Stewart was also doing at the time. While I played it in the shop, my pal Bob and his three-year-old son Len had tea and biscuits laid on for us by Roger who works there and was telling us about the time he went to see the Incredible String Band back in the late 1960s. Whenever I listen to that Frankie Miller record, I'll think about Roger, Bob, Len, tea and biscuits and the Incredible String Band.

This is what some people will never understand about physical formats. The decluttering guru on daytime TV frog-marching a beleaguered hoarder to the skip doesn't get it. Your Spotify playlist will never activate memories of comparable intensity. The 2,663 downloads in my iTunes have no stories to tell. My brain is a computer that filled up a long time ago. But it's okay. I have an external hard drive, and it's called a record collection.

Pete Paphides is a music journalist, record collector and broadcaster. Catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm

Your Spotify playlist will never activate memories of comparable intensity

Three Slabs Of Stereolab

The band's reissue campaign offers up more vinyl treats

Stereolab's seven-year reissue programme continues with a trio of releases on 13 September. Available through Warp Records and the band's own label, Duophonic UHF Disks, the next wave comprises 1996's *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*, 1997's *Dots And Loops* and 1999's snappily titled *Cobra And Phases Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night* as expanded editions.

Each album has been remastered from the original tapes by Bo Kondren at Calyx Mastering, with bonus material including alternate takes and unreleased four-track demos and mixes.

The first batch of 500 copies of each LP will be pressed on triple clear vinyl with a numbered obi strip made out of 2" 24-track Stereolab master tape, poster inner and scratchcard – with all winners getting an exclusive Stereolab record later this year. The limited edition versions are available only through mail order.

684

The number of 7-inches in Tim Claydon's collection of every UK No. 1 single from 1952-1992. It went under the hammer as we were going to press, expected to fetch a minimum of £30,000.

THE GOSPEL TRUTH

Luaka Bop releases a historic compilation of 70s secular gospel as part of the label's World Spirituality Classics Series on 13 September. Compiled by soul DJ Greg Belson, it features artists such as The Triumphs, The Gospel I.Q.'s and The Floyd Family Singers, released on labels such as Lovie D, Du-Vern, Senoj and Arc-Bel-Kno.

4 OF A KIND... Citrus Fruit

THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION
ORANGE
JSBX's frenetic take on the blues reached new heights of sweaty rockin' insanity on their (possibly citrus fruit-inspired) fourth studio album.

CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN
KEY LIME PIE
The smart-aleck alternative rock vets' fifth album was a zesty oven-baked treat that included a bizarre cover of Status Quo's *Pictures Of Matchstick Men*.

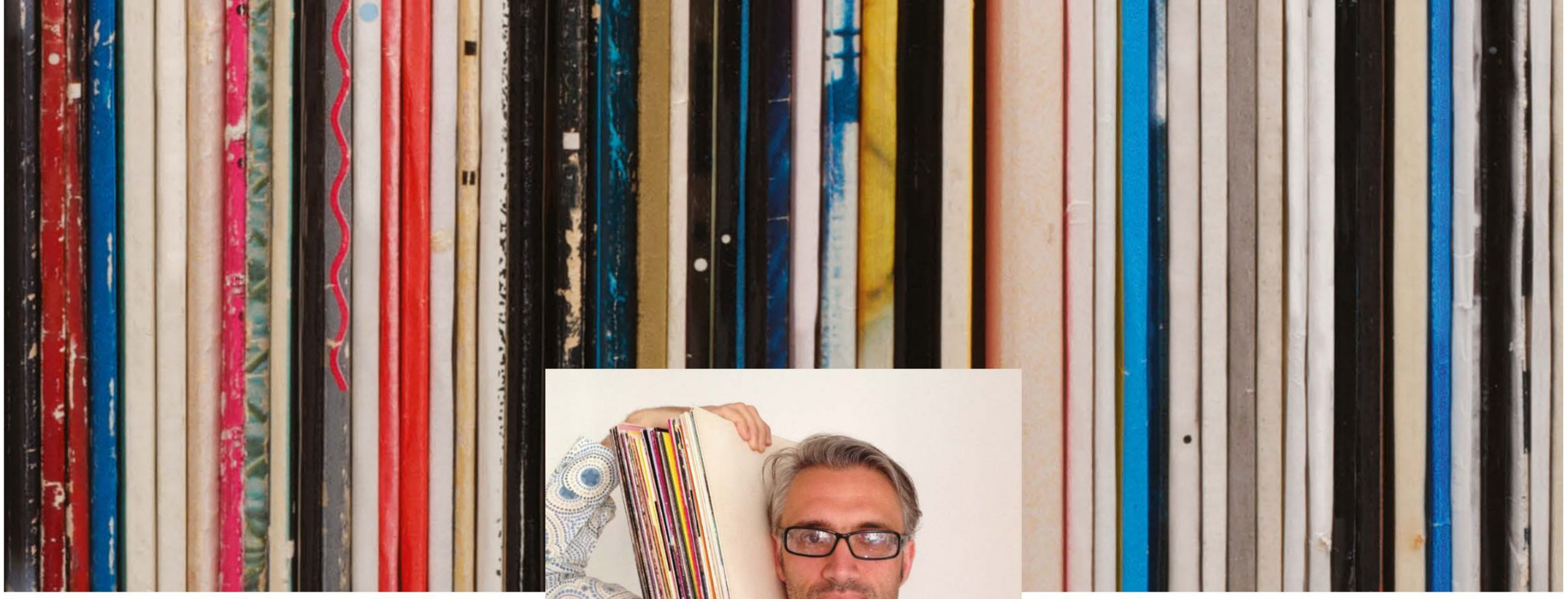
KIRAN LEONARD
GRAPEFRUIT
Released on Moshi Moshi Records in 2016, the Manchester-born singer-songwriter dished up a challenging serving of sweet and sour wonder on his second full album.

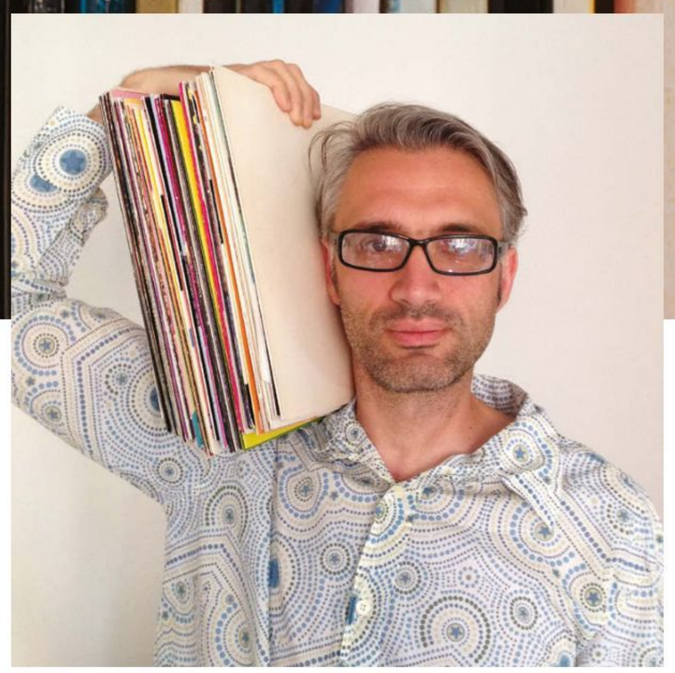
XTC
ORANGES & LEMONS
Two citrus fruits for the price of one from Swindon's archest hit-makers. *Oranges & Lemons* is an 80s reworking of 60s pyschedelia.

Coming Soon...

Our pick of the new vinyl releases

23 AUGUST Jay Som, *Anak Ko* (Polyvinyl); Noah Gunderson, *Lover* (Cooking Vinyl); Taylor Swift, *Lover* (UMC)
30 AUGUST Bon Iver, *I, I* (Jagjaguwar); !!!, *Wallop* (Warp); Ezra Furman, *Twelve Nudes* (Bella Union); The Futureheads, *Powers* (Nul Records); Tool, TBA; Whitney, *Forever Turned Around* (Secretly Canadian)
6 SEPTEMBER Bat For Lashes, *Lost Girl* (Bat For Lashes); Chrissie Hynde, *Valve Bone Woe* (BMG); Status Quo, *Backbone* (earMusic); Tinariwen, *Amadjar* (PIAS); The Brand New Heavies, *TBNH* (Acid Jazz); Oscar Scheller, *HTTP404* (Wichita)
13 SEPTEMBER Devendra Banhart, *Ma* (Nonesuch); Gruff Rhys, *Pang!* (Rough Trade); Metronomy, *Metronomy Forever* (Because Music); Pixies, *Beneath The Eyrie* (Infectious); The Lumineers, *IIII* (Dualtone); Lee Hazelwood, *400 Miles From L.A.* (Light In The Attic); Belle & Sebastian, *Days Of The Bagnold Summer* (Matador); Jenny Hval, *The Practice Of Love* (Sacred Bones); Various Artists, *The Time For Peace Is Now* (Luaka Bop); Angelina, *Last Cigarette* (Wonderful Sound)
20 SEPTEMBER Mark Morris, *Look Up* (Reckless Yes); Sir Was, *Holding On To A Dream* (Memphis Industries); Efterklang, *Altid Sammen* (4AD); Hiss Golden Messenger, *Terms Of Surrender* (Merge)





IAN PEEL'S

LINER NOTES

Currently putting together the release of a rare concert recording on vinyl, our faithful columnist has pulled out all his favourite live albums for inspiration

The live LP I'm working on right now is with the Art Of Noise. One of the most famous studio-based groups of all time have also had an interesting and appropriately random life on stage. Like when they became a sample-based jazz octet in the mid-80s. And when they jammed poetry and drum 'n' bass at the end of the last century. All of which led to lots of material in the can that's never been heard since it was performed, just waiting to start a new life on vinyl.

One of these super-rare live projects is a specially commissioned soundtrack for the millennium fireworks and 'river of fire' from the centre of GMT on New Year's Eve 1999, complete with a voiceover by Ian McShane. Another is their first show in Japan, from the summer of 1986. It was recorded on multitrack tape so, once tracked down, restored and baked, it has been possible to mix and remix all these years later.

So that's my project for this month, starting with the all-important 'side splits'. In other words, with a 74-minute concert, and not wanting to put more than 19 minutes per side of vinyl for sound quality reasons, exactly where should I fade out and pause, to go from one side to another, without spoiling the momentum of the concert?

How else to answer this than by diving into some classic live LPs for inspiration? There's too many to choose from. But I can recommend, from my own collection, Peter Gabriel's *Plays Live* (and, for that matter, *Secret World: Live* and *Live Blood*), The Nits' *Urk*, Talking Heads' *Stop Making Sense*, Ultravox's *Monument*, The Cure's *Entreat*, and R.E.M.'s *Unplugged*.

I called Chris Topham from Plane Groovy Records for some tips and a second opinion. Top of his list was the Roxy Music spin-off project 801 Live. "It's a masterpiece," he says, "with Phil Manzanera, Brian Eno and Bill MacCormick all on fire. But the star of the show for me was Simon Phillips. He was just 16 at the time and yet was a majestic presence.

I've made a tick-box list of all these live tropes for the record I'm working on

The other live album I always come back to is *Viva!* by Roxy Music, a joyous blast of energy right from the opening track."

The first live LP I ever bought with my own money was Level 42's *A Physical Presence* in 1985. It's an absolute tour de force and a perfect encapsulation of their CV at the end of their first five-album apprenticeship and on the eve of the Madonna-supporting stadium-level pop years. What's more, it has all the trappings of a great live album. Intro/walk-on music? Check. Extended solos, exclusive tracks (with no studio counterparts)? Check and check. Amusing between-song banter, audience participation and multiple encores? Check, check, check!

I've made a tick-box list of all of these live LP tropes for the record I'm working on. As for those tricky side-splits, there's only two tracks on Side D of *A Physical Presence*. But when one of them is an almost 10-minute rendition of *Love Games*, and the other is the 12-minute close-out, funk-out jam of *88*, who's complaining?

On my turntable this month are *How To Dismantle An Atomic Bomb* and *The Unforgettable Fire*: a coloured vinyl reissue catch-up with U2. I'm also spinning the deliciously deep-end 25th anniversary boxset edition of Julian Cope's *Autogeddon*, with its cloth-bound, gold-embossed cover and all.

THE VINYLIST TIM JENNINGS

As his collection grows, more shelving is fast becoming Tim's priority

What was the first record you bought?
"The first record I bought was Simple Minds' *Sanctify Yourself* on seven-inch in Boots. The first LP I bought was *Now 7* when on holiday in Cornwall. I still have both records in my collection. I listened to them both recently and they are still loved and treasured."

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"I am most interested in 90s and beyond indie bands. Although I do also collect some punk, new wave, techno, hip-hop, folk and country music. My first proper love was Suede, and I have lots of Manic Street Preachers in my collection. The Fall and Placebo feature heavily, too. I obsessively collect The Fatima Mansions, Microdisney and anything linked to Cathal Coughlan."

How many records do you have?
"I think I have around 400 LPs. And 200+ 7/10-inches. I previously had a big collection, which I sold the majority of 18 years ago. So I'm gradually building it up again. I have around 200 CDs, too. Room for the collection is running out, I need to buy some more shelving!"

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"The most valuable record I have is a copy of Beck's *Midnite Vultures*, which I bought recently from a shop in Eastbourne. A copy of The High Llamas' *Gideon Gaye* bought in Soho last year was pricey, too. Singles-wise, the first Strokes 7-inch was probably the most I've paid for a single. As with most people, there is a strict budget!"

What's the holy grail record that you'd most like to own?
"My holy grail has to be Belle And Sebastian's *Tigermilk,* Electric Honey copy. It appears on Discogs and eBay, but at way above my price range. The other holy grail for me is a Microdisney 7-inch of *Town To Town*, which comes with a cassette of live tracks. I've never seen a copy for sale."

What's your listening setup?
"My setup is a Pro-Ject Audio Essential III turntable, an Onkyo A-9010 amp, a NAD CD player, a Technics single-deck cassette player and a pair of Sony speakers. I need to get some decent speakers really, but I love what I have. Most evenings are spent happily playing my vinyl."

MOST VALUABLE VINYL

TALKING HEADS
FEAR OF MUSIC
Original 1979 UK 11-track LP produced by Brian Eno, plus a bonus live 7" featuring *Psycho Killer* and *New Feeling* [SAM108]. Housed in an embossed picture sleeve with lyric inner. SRK6076.
£40

OASIS
DEFINITELY MAYBE
1994 issue UK 12-track double LP, including classic singles *Live Forever* and *Supersonic,* plus exclusive to this format *Sad Song* in a glossy gatefold picture sleeve. Hand-scratched catalogue numbers in run-out grooves. CRELP169.
£195

OASIS
SUPERSONIC
Rare 1994 UK Creation label limited edition 7" vinyl single for their debut single from the landmark *Definitely Maybe* album, also including *Take Me Away*. Complete with glossy picture sleeve. CRE176.
£50

OASIS
COLUMBIA
Rare 1993 UK original Creation single-sided promotional-only 12", limited to 510 copies and distributed to radio and media for Christmas 1993. This is the original first issue with correct matrix number CTP8A and 'DAMONT AUDIO L.T.D.' etching CTP8.
£295

Now Spinning

12 tracks on the *Long Live Vinyl* turntable this month, best enjoyed with a can of StaggerSaurus (4% ABV), a citrusy IPA from Portsmouth's very own, rather excellent Staggeringly Good Brewery.

What Goes On **The Velvet Underground** (Polydor/UME)
Kill Switch **Ride** (Wichita)
Roadrunner **The Modern Lovers** (Music On Vinyl)
No Bullets Spent **Spoon** (Matador)
Calm Down **Ezra Furman** (Bella Union)
The Center Won't Hold **Sleater-Kinney** (Mom + Pop)
Whip **Hiss Golden Messenger** (Merge)
Dawn Chorus **Thom Yorke** (XL Recordings)
Head Swim **Fionn Regan** (Abbey Records)
Superbike **Jay Som** (Lucky Number)
Inspiration! **W.H. Lung** (Incidental)
Listen Up **Oasis** (Creation)

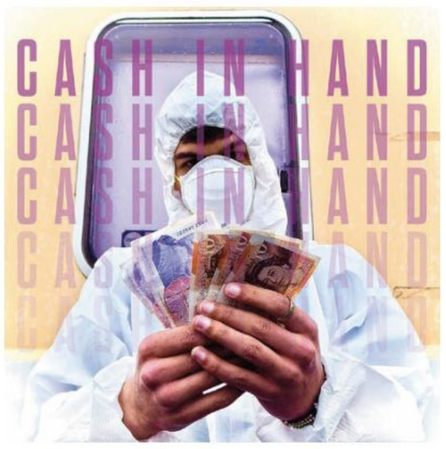
The Sky's The Limit

Post-rock heroes revisit a pair of early albums

Explosions In The Sky have announced reissues of their albums *How Strange, Innocence* and *The Rescue* through the Temporary Residence label on 16 August.

The Rescue is out on vinyl for the first time, having been released on CD in 2005 and gained the nickname 'The Secret Album' among fans of the Texas post-rock titans. *How Strange, Innocence* is the band's debut album.

Both records have been remastered from the original tapes, with *How Strange, Innocence* available in standard black and light and dark blue swirl edition and *The Rescue* pressed on standard black and orange discs.



HEAVY VICTORY

Heavy Rapids have been named winners of the Record Store Day RSD Unsigned competition. The Glaswegian indie-punk band's debut EP *Cash In Hand* has been pressed in a limited run of 500. Judge Natasha Youngs of Resident Music says: "I love their energy, these guys sound like the real deal."

do you have a record collection to sell?

top prices paid for vinyl LPs, 12"s, 7"s, singles, EPs, CDs,

autographs, music memorabilia, concert programmes & more

posters, handbills, tickets, picture discs,

coloured vinyl records, box sets, limited editions

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MODERN NATURE

Circular groove-based collaboration that takes you on a journey

How To Live is a cyclical journey, a record that locks into a motorik groove from the sombre cello strains of opener *Bloom* through to the fading organ motif that sees out its final track, *Devotee*.

Modern Nature's debut album, crafted by Ultimate Painting's Jack Cooper in collaboration with Will Young of Beak> is a complete piece, songs melding into each other, all the while maintaining a sense of forward momentum. Released by Bella Union, it's at times bucolic folk, while evoking the inventive spirit of Young's other band.

"After the last Ultimate Painting album, I did a solo record and as I was writing it, there was kind of a theme that emerged about my home town of Blackpool," says Cooper.

"When I started the next batch of writing, which became the Modern Nature record, going back to 10 or 11 unconnected songs felt strange. I elaborated on the framework from the solo record and started thinking of it as one long piece. The opening song acts as a way of establishing the main character or theme, and that theme is there all the way through. The whole intention was for it to be two sides of vinyl and for the two to mirror each other. The final song's melody is the melody of the cello that opens the album, and there are lots of other ways we tried to mirror each side. The idea for the album was for it to be a journey from one place to another."

The primary theme Cooper and Young explore along that journey is the invisible line where urban meets rural.

"When you live in a big city, being on your own and feeling isolated can be completely overwhelming," says Cooper. "You can be in a huge city of millions of people but feel alone, and that contrasts with how being on your own in nature and a more rural setting can feel comforting and exhilarating."

Recording took place at Gizzard studios in Stratford, with former Toe Rag Studios engineer Ed Deegan sharing the band's analogue outlook. Cooper says Young's input was equally crucial. "As soon as I explained to Will what I wanted to do and we started working on songs together, it became a partnership and eventually a band. He's extremely musical and has a certain amount of training, which I don't have. He brings a musicality to it, and the things he does, like playing two contrasting parts on keyboards, his technique cannot be underestimated.

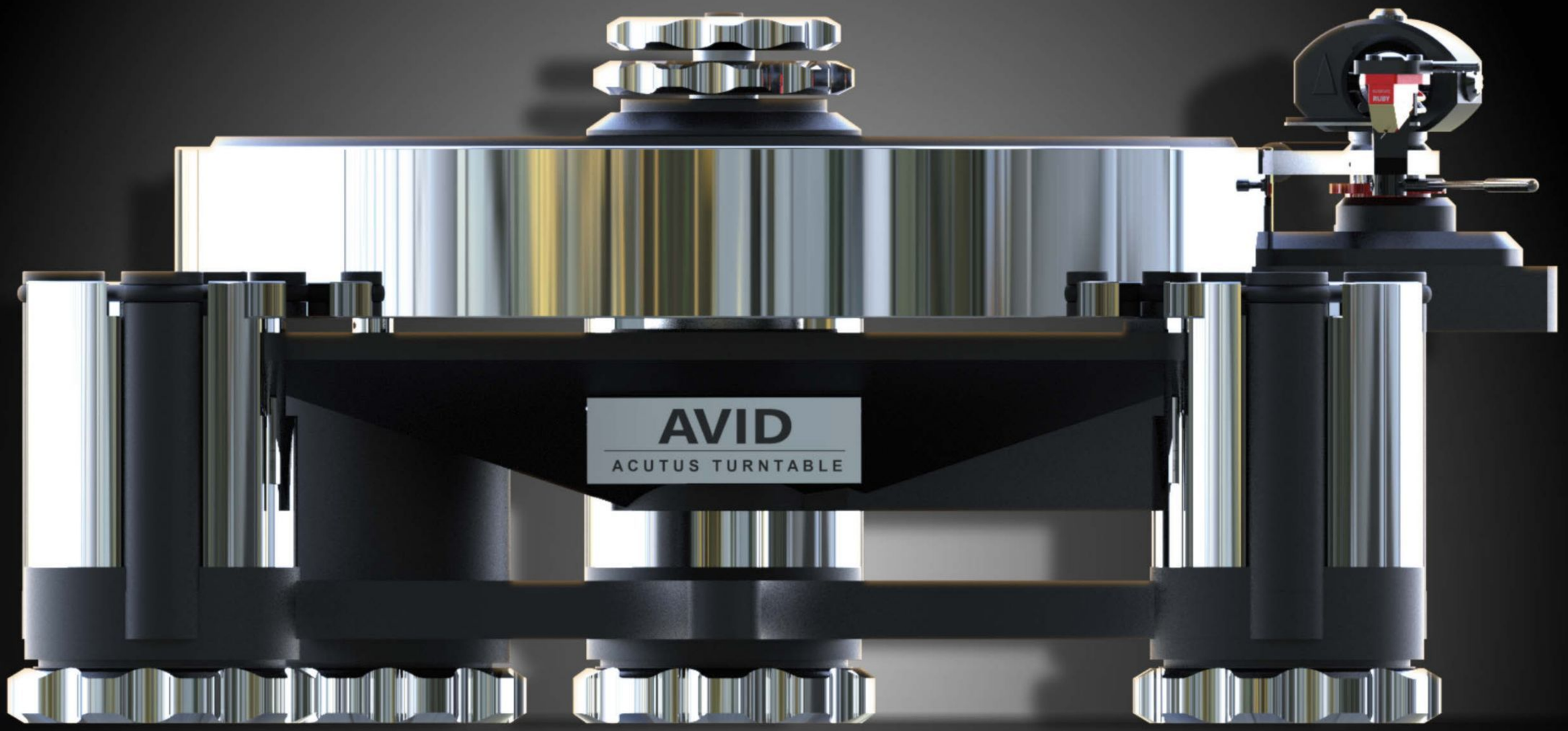
"We'd been trying to work together for a long time, and as well as how talented he is, he's always just been the best company, which is just as important.

"The thing that feels very central on the record to me is the way the guitar and arpeggiated organ work together. I think of that as the sound of the band, as it were. That couldn't happen without either of us."

Having recorded the album live, with few overdubs, the band realised quickly that recreating it on tour should be simple. Young and Cooper were joined in the studio by cellist Rupert Gillett, Woods drummer Aaron Neveu and saxophonist Jeff Tobias of Brooklyn jazz/rock band Sunwatchers, and they form the core of the live band. "We have shows coming and we're starting to work on them and figure things out. We recorded it all live," says Cooper, "so when we had a few days of rehearsals we played it through once and were like, 'Oh, this is going to be fine!'"

JAMES SHARP/BIG RED PHOTOGRAPHY

WELCOME TO AUDIOPHILE



ACUTUS CLASSIC

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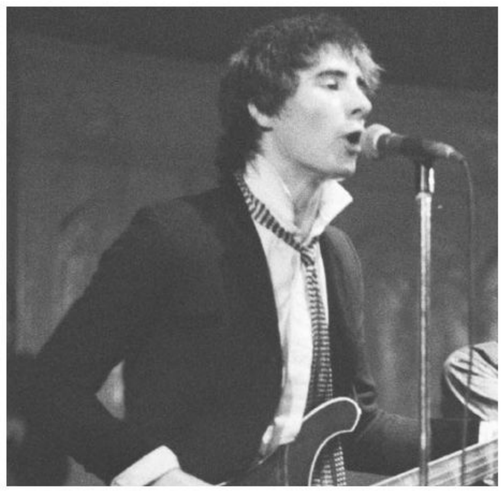
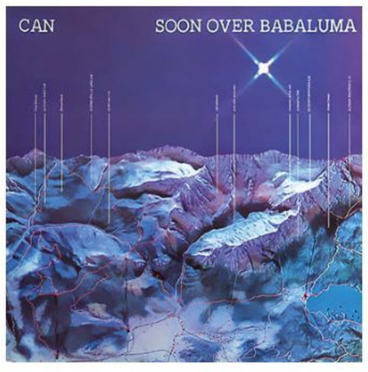


CRATE DIGGING WITH...
GLEN MATLOCK

The erstwhile Sex Pistols bassist and Rich Kids frontman is currently on tour in support of his solo record, *Good To Go*. He shares 10 of his favourite albums with **Dave Steinfeld**

FACES
A NOD IS AS GOOD AS A WINK... TO A BLIND HORSE

"It's got *Stay With Me* on it and it opens with *Miss Judy's Farm*, which is one of the best rock/soul workouts ever. The Faces seemed like they had a laugh about everything. There's so much style and soul in their playing."



CAN
SOON OVER BABALUMA

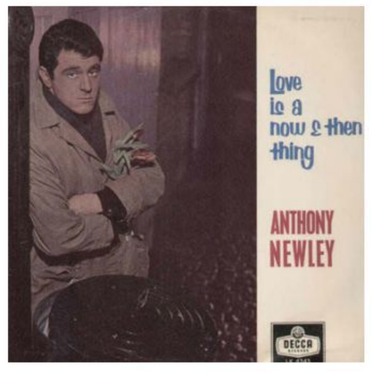
"A totally different vibe… the atmospherics, the playing, the groove. Jaki Liebezeit on the drums, Holger Czukay on bass. Also, one of the best shows I ever saw was at Hammersmith Palais Dancehall in 1974. Can playing live, just jamming for two hours. Fantastic."

JOHN LENNON
JOHN LENNON/ PLASTIC ONO BAND

"The first one. It's just so stark, simple, soulful. A complete departure from some of the schmaltzy Beatles shite. Ringo's playing… and Klaus Voormann is one of my favourite bass players. So there's lots of stuff going on there."

THE ANIMALS
ANIMAL TRACKS

"I think this was one of their best-ofs. There's something about Eric Burdon's voice; you know damn well if you spill his pint, he'll knock your teeth out! It just comes across in his singing."



ANTHONY NEWLEY
LOVE IS A NOW AND THEN THING

"It's got a picture of him on the cover in a dustbin with dying flowers. Sorta schmaltzy kind of songs, but I'm a big Anthony Newley fan. I've got a couple of his wacky vinyl albums."

HUMBLE PIE
PERFORMANCE ROCKIN' THE FILLMORE

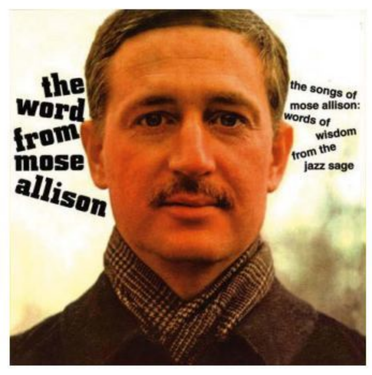
"It's the band Steve Marriott left The Small Faces for and it's a double live album – the best double live album. I saw them with Peter Frampton in Hyde Park. They were supporting Grand Funk Railroad and they blew Grand Funk off the stage."

DAVID BOWIE
THE RISE AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS

"I've picked this not so much for the songs as for the sound. That's what I tried to get on my last album. Bowie plays rhythm acoustic guitar on that album, and that lets the lead guitar come through."

VARIOUS ARTISTS
MOTOWN CHARTBUSTERS VOL. 4

"I think it's Volume 5, or maybe it's Volume 4… The one with the silver cover. It's got *I Want You Back* by The Jackson 5 and stuff like that."



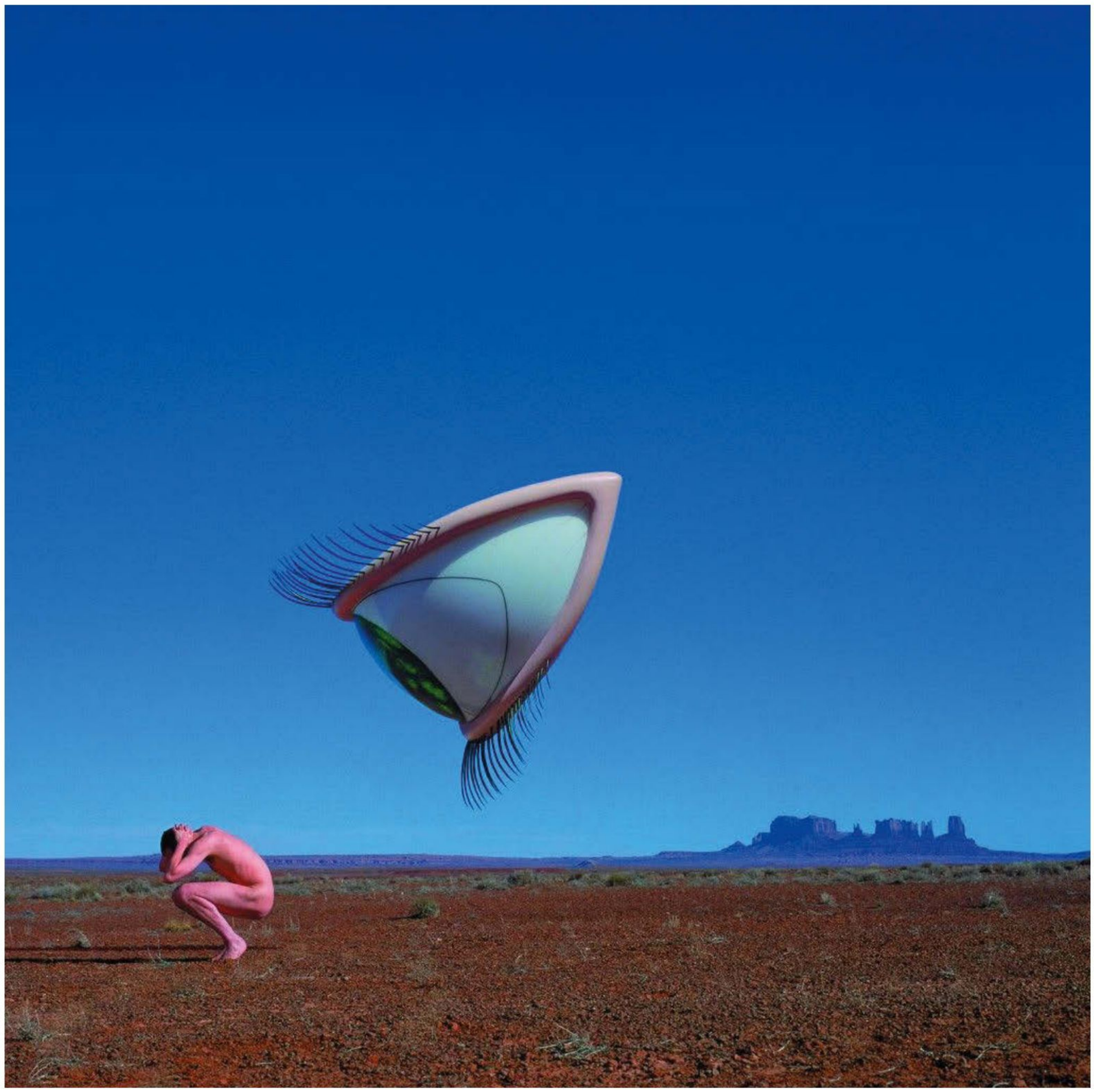
MOSE ALLISON
THE WORD FROM MOSE

"I think it's just the height of beatnik cool. If you listen to a lot of his stuff, it sounds the same: two verses, solo, verse, outro. The playing's great and the lyrics are fantastic. There's something about the groove. If it weren't for Mose, there would be no *My Generation* by The Who."

FACES
LONG PLAYER

"*Long Player* was instrumental in me being a musician. *Bad 'N' Ruin* is the opening track, it's kind of the Faces meet The Meters. Really only one chord, which isn't very good if all you can do is play chords, you know?"

KOEN SUYK / ANEFO / NATIONAAL ARCHIEF



#28 Bury The Hatchet

THE CRANBERRIES

"Both surprised and heartened that The Cranberries chose the design at all," was the verdict of Hipgnosis artist Storm Thorgerson, aka the most famous sleeve designer of them all, about this cover for the band's fourth album. "The Cranberries had previously used pictures of themselves, often on a sofa. Our image was clearly a departure, with not a sofa in sight."

Coming at the end of a hiatus for The Cranberries, *Bury The Hatchet* addresses themes of divorce and child abuse, with the band fixed uncomfortably in the glare of the all seeing eye of mass fame. Thorgerson's design has been interpreted as referencing all of those points. He explained: "The eye of Big Brother, of surveillance, or of a police state, of the inner conscience, pursues you everywhere. Even in the vast open spaces of Arizona, our luckless hero cannot get away. Pushed into the corner of the album cover by the all seeing eye of paranoia."

Somewhat surprisingly, the design was included in *Pitchfork*'s list of the worst album covers of all time, with the damning critique: "Storm Thorgerson's artwork fluctuates between the iconic and the insane. This one falls into the latter category."

FRANS SCHELLEKENS/REDFERNS

SNAPSHOT

JEFF BUCKLEY

THE NETHERLANDS, 1994

Jeff Buckley is pictured here on stage at Lowlands Festival in August 1994, three days after the release of his debut album, *Grace*. While sales of the record were initially slow and the critical reaction lukewarm, 25 years later, Buckley's sole LP is rightly regarded as a masterpiece. David Bowie named it as one of his desert island records, Jimmy Page said it was his favourite album of the 1990s and Bob Dylan called Buckley "one of the greatest songwriters of this decade". Buckley's attempts to record the album's follow-up, *My Sweetheart, The Drunk*, were cut short in tragic circumstances when he drowned in the Mississippi river in May 1997. He was 30 years old. The haunting words of the opening verse of *Grace*'s title track took on a new poignance: "There's the moon asking to stay/ Long enough for the clouds to fly me away/ It's my time coming/ I'm not afraid, afraid to die." ●

WHY I LOVE

LOU REED
BERLIN

BARRY HYDE

We catch up with Barry Hyde from The Futureheads to find out more about his love of The Velvet Underground man's divisive and harrowing third album. By **Felix Rowe**

I had a profound experience listening to *Berlin* when I was a child, because of one particular song, *The Kids*. It's actually kind of traumatising. It must have been the early 80s. I remember vividly because it was a Sunday, and me mam, who was a night shift nurse, was upstairs asleep. To entertain me, my dad has us in the kitchen listening to music and this song came on.

It's very harrowing actually, it's not a party album. It's a song about a sex worker who has her children taken off her, and it's like, "They're taking the children away, because they said she was not a good mother." Then, towards the end, these children start crying for their mother. It instantly haunted me. Apparently, what happened was Lou Reed and the producer, Bob Ezrin, actually told Ezrin's kids that their mum had died in a car crash and recorded it. It's very twisted and completely unacceptable. I was scarred for life just listening to it!

But, at the same time, the reason why I love Lou Reed is that he will write about topics that no-one else would dream of touching. *Berlin*'s a good example, because you've got songs about social services taking children away, a song like *The Bed*, a very beautiful, almost ethereal song about a woman who kills herself. And then you've got songs about people overdosing. Right from The Velvet Underground, he always wrote about taboo topics and quite often spun them into a position of musical beauty.

It wasn't until I was older that I re-listened to it, after being reminded of *Berlin* by some writing from Lester Bangs. As a journalist, Bangs had a real vendetta/fondness for Lou Reed. I suppose he was a fascinating character at the time, because he was extremely difficult in interviews, very bratty – and that was quite fascinating to me, almost like an evil character in his attitude.

I fell in love with The Velvet Underground when I was about 14 or 15, listening to them on my paper round. You look at those photos of the Velvets, they just look so cool! They were so ahead of their time – really, they invented punk in the 60s, though it didn't truly arrive until the end of the 70s. They were making this dangerous music... any subject goes.

Then this memory came back from when I was a kid. On release, it was critically slammed, and it didn't sell that well either. But listening to it as a young musician, which I was by that point, I was just amazed by it. Lou Reed's music tends to be very simplistic, and his use of harmony and chords, but the production on *Berlin* is just absolutely exquisite. You've got jazz elements in there, found sounds... it's an orchestral rock album, basically. It's quite pompous, and I like that as well, because he was a rock 'n' roller. But, in terms of his musical language, *Berlin*'s pretty far out.

His previous record, *Transformer*, is great, but I think it's really a David Bowie album. Bowie's influence on *Transformer* is undeniable, you can hear him on the 'bong bong bong... Satellite of Love' – he's just there! Ingrained in it. And that's absolutely fine. But *Berlin* is a difficult album, and that's something that appealed to me.

Among others, Lou Reed made me realise that music is truly an artform. It's OK to sell records, but art first, and Reed is a superb example of that kind of artist who didn't give a shit. You've got things like *Metal Machine Music*, essentially four sides of avant-garde noise, which he made to get out of his record contract. That kind of attitude, challenging the music industry, even challenging music critics – that's an important ethic and really liberating as an artist. ●

"PRODUCER EZRIN
TOLD HIS KIDS THAT
THEIR MUM HAD DIED
IN A CAR CRASH
AND RECORDED IT"

“There’s enough things in life parading around as perfection. Is that what people really want? I don’t want to hear that. You don’t want perfection, you want something that sounds real”

With Pixies now more settled than at any time since *Bossanova*, excellent new album *Beneath The Eyrie* sees the band conjure up more mythical folk tales and songs about (possibly) werewolves. **John Earls** meets Black Francis to hear about his quest for authenticity, how it’s possible to care too much and the importance of believing your children…

TRAVIS SHINN

L-R: Joey Santiago, Paz Lenchantin, David Lovering, Black Francis

Indie Cindy was Pixies' comeback record and *Head Carrier* was their first with new bassist Paz Lenchantin. It makes *Beneath The Eyrie* their first album with a truly settled line-up since their third album *Bossanova* back in 1990. Not that Black Francis sees it that way: "Our analysis would go, '*Indie Cindy* is a record with a band member missing – our friend plays bass on the record, but replacing the band member was a longer process. *Head Carrier* is the organic matriculation of that new member'. We think of it in those basic, common-sense terms. There's no romanticising."

Pixies' common-sense approach to their career becomes a theme of our interview. Black Francis is highly entertaining company, one of the best theorisers about the music industry you could wish to be educated by. His expansive thoughts about his band's role in music mean he's easily able to bat away any attempt to get to know the real Charles Thompson. Always going by Charles when he's not on stage, he meets *Long Live Vinyl* at an office suite at the Royal Garden Hotel, the five-star Kensington property which has been a mainstay for visiting rock stars for decades. It's a sweltering summer Friday, but our interview is largely in darkness: not because Charles is a vampiric rock ghoul, but because an overhead light shines right in his eyes and neither of us can work out how to use the dimmers. Smartly dressed and in wire-framed glasses, he resembles a favourite college professor and speaks as rapidly and excitedly as if he were about to burst into *Crackity Jones*.

Around *Head Carrier*, the rest of the band emphasised how Lenchantin's enthusiasm to make her first Pixies album rubbed off on all of them. It's a verve which carried on into *Beneath The Eyrie*. "Paz's enthusiasm is still there and I think we've now caught up to her," smiles Francis. "We'd been accustomed to a mood that was tense and a bit of a downer for a long time. Paz joining shifted things in our midst, but at first you're both trying to follow each other's cue so that everyone is comfortable. We're now in a space where we've realised, 'Oh, hang on, things aren't so bad! This is actually awesome! Great!'" He's aware that enjoying Lenchantin's enthusiasm sounds like a rebuke to Kim Deal, who left in 2013 after nine years of shows but little new music. "We went through a lot of tension and turmoil, because for whatever reason Kim didn't want to be there," explains Francis. "That's not a criticism of her – it simply wasn't her Tao. Her Tao was saying, 'I've got to get out of here'. When Kim left, we were shellshocked for 24 hours, but the next day – once we decided we could complete what became *Indie Cindy* – the three of us felt, 'Great! We're all motivated to be here, this seems fun to us, so now we can just record'. Even at that point, we were able to tap into an enthusiasm."

> **We went through a lot of tension and turmoil, because Kim didn't want to be there**

This mix of enthusiasm and common sense applies to Francis and Lenchantin's co-writing methods on *Beneath The Eyrie*, including the album's first single *On Graveyard Hill* and *Los Surfers Muertos*, a wry horror story the bassist sings. "We sit around a table, drink coffee or wine and try to get into a hypomanic state," says Francis. "I imagine it's like how people wrote songs in Tin Pan Alley, sat around a piano in a coat and tie. It's work, but it's happy. It's not about being inspired, it's about work.

TRAVIS SHINN

Another Planet Of Sound

Rather than simply feature a lithograph or a signed print, the £50 boxset version of *Beneath The Eyrie* has a hugely tempting exclusive: a second vinyl disc featuring nine additional songs from the album's sessions.

Unavailable elsewhere, the demos are of songs including *How I Learned To Earn Rewards* and *Hey, Debussy,* which didn't make the finished album.

Black Francis explains: "We knew the label needed extra content and, when we listened to the demos again, we thought, 'Oh yeah, that'll work'. At the time, when we made those demos, we wouldn't have said that, as we didn't think they'd be good enough.

"But after the record was done, we asked the engineer to mix them and clean them up a little. They're demos, but we're not embarrassed by them. Most of the songs are ones we decided would never be suitable for the album, so we didn't attempt full studio recordings. There are two we did attempt, but we didn't like the way they came out, so they got left off the album.

"It's usually our producer Tom Dalgety who decides to leave a song off, but sometimes it's the band – we go, 'Nah, this isn't as good as the demo, so let's drop it'."

The inspiration already happened, once you decided to be a musician." Francis ultimately views himself more as a songwriter than a musician, saying: "Even if I'm depressed and life isn't good, I've never been so low that I can't tap into the thing that I enjoy. Making music is a relief for me, an escape from the realities of life." Valuing his songwriting more than his musicianship, Francis is sometimes frustrated by his singing, admitting: "I go back and forth between liking my voice and thinking, 'Oh, I wish it was a little more interesting'. Rather than being a singer who uses singing to present the mechanics of a song, in rock music – it's true in other forms of music, but especially rock music – it's about attitude." To get into the mindset of the characters who people his songs, Francis is aware of how much humour, seriousness, accent and attitude he needs to bring. "All these subtle things go into making a song believable," he explains.

LET IT BE

Believability is important to Francis. Pixies songs may be full of horror, Old Testament imagery and scattergun narratives, but it's the very randomness of their nature which makes them authentic, according to the singer. "If I understand surrealism correctly, part of it is not over-analysing it at the moment of creation and being open; letting your internal landscape simply be, and try to feel that. We incorporate that aesthetic in a lot of what we do. I think it's why certain songs resonate with the audience, they pick up on that."

So it's the intangible atmosphere of a song that makes *Debaser* and *Monkey Gone To Heaven* so compelling? Francis expounds: "If the audience don't know what the song is about – and if I don't know what the song is about – they respond to some sort of realness, where they go, 'Oh, this is authentic'. It's the quest for authenticity, as opposed to trying to sell somebody something or fawning to the audience. We don't fawn to the audience: we want to entertain them, we want them to be happy they're there, but the way they're going to be happiest is if we're authentic, even if it's quirky or has a frailty to it. There's enough things in life parading around as perfection. Is that what people really want? I don't want to hear that. You don't want perfection, you want something that sounds real."

This ambiguity of meaning is present in the Stephen King-style unease of *Silver Bullet* on the new album. Originally titled 'Screwpine', it was written for *Head Carrier* but needed rewriting to sharpen it up. "It's abstract but chock full of imagery," says Francis. "When a song is like that, you're not worried at first at having it make too much sense, even to yourself." *Silver Bullet* is one of many Pixies songs where the full meaning is lost, even to Black Francis. He grins broadly as he admits: "I understand the story a little when I'm writing it, because you're manic when you're writing and revving at a higher speed. You say, 'See, this is connected to this, which is connected to that'. It makes sense to you at the time… but then a year later, you go, 'I can't make any sense of this at all. What was I thinking?'" At least Francis' 13-year-old daughter Lucy, one of five children with wife Violet, has a theory about *Silver Bullet*. "It's her favourite song on the album," Francis beams. "She said, 'Oh dad, this is a werewolf song!' It was intended to be more personal; a psychological, hall-of-mirrors headspace song. Even though I never thought of it again, I'd been aware of a silver bullet's connotations with killing werewolves as I was writing. And my daughter's interpretation totally makes sense. If my 13-year-old daughter says it's a werewolf song, I'm going to say, 'Yeah, it's totally a werewolf song!'"

Head Carrier had been the first Pixies album where any songs were left over from its recording. Brilliant breakneck thrash *Long Rider* also dates back to its precursor's sessions. "I have some patience now," Francis reveals. "I'm getting better at that Leonard Cohen attitude of keeping on writing a song until it's really great. We have a song called *I Like To Drive,* which has a really good guitar shape, but needs another lyric rewrite. It may become our *Gimme Shelter* – The Rolling Stones were able to exercise that restraint as young men, and I'm only learning it now."

There's a more practical reason why Pixies never had songs left over in their first incarnation: their first four albums were released every year until they imploded after *Trompe Le Monde* in 1991. "We were getting splashes in the papers and selling plenty of concert tickets," Francis recalls.

"That meant a lot of demand for content. The instruction was, 'Make another record now. So long as it has one song that's catchy, we don't care: go for it'. That was cool, as it gave us a lot of freedom to be weird and not have to think about it too much. But I can't say all our old songs stand up for me now. They do, according to the people who believe in 'The canon of the Pixies', and they're at least interesting. But they don't resonate with us now, and we're not inclined to play them live."

Francis' further thoughts on songwriting have recently been heard in *It's A Pixies Podcast*, the self-explanatory 13-part podcast

Santiago and Francis on stage in Las Vegas in April this year

which has, since June, documented the making of *Beneath The Eyrie*. Francis cheerfully admits the money the producers offered to help fund recording the album was the band's main motivation, adding: "We like rockumentaries, and so long as it didn't intrude too much on getting the work done, we didn't have a problem with it."

Tom Dalgety, Pixies' producer, who also works with Royal Blood and Rammstein, ensured podcast journalist Tony Fletcher knew his boundaries. Francis calls Dalgety "a little bulldog" at explaining the studio parameters to Fletcher. He adopts a conspiratorial, gossipy whisper as he recalls Dalgety's treatment of Fletcher: "We'd watch from the corner, going, 'Ouch! Tony kicked out of the control room!' I felt bad for him at times, but he had plenty of access – we'd have dinner and hang out." Indeed, Francis did his best to make the podcast entertaining, revealing: "I feel I come off as loud and a bit of a pompous ass. But you're in a room with people, it's lively, people are recording you and they're looking for content. You're trying to help them out, so instead of sitting there quietly, you [adopts circus ringmaster shout] TELL THEM A STORY. You've got to give them something."

It seems a lot truer to your identity to just care about the music and not things like the album cover

Dalgety first worked on *Head Carrier*, after Steve Albini and then Gil Norton had produced Pixies' previous albums. But Francis dismisses the notion that Somerset-raised Dalgety is their new permanent producer, shrugging: "We like working with him, but we just want to make records and so does Tom. It's not this precious relationship we must maintain at all costs." Dalgety chose the Woodstock studio Dreamland to record *Beneath The Eyrie* – the album is named after a bird's nest Joey Santiago noticed in a tree above the studio. With the glee you'd expect from a man whose songs run red with viscera, Francis recounts hearing mice and rats running across the walls at night. "I didn't actually see them, and they never bothered me," he says.

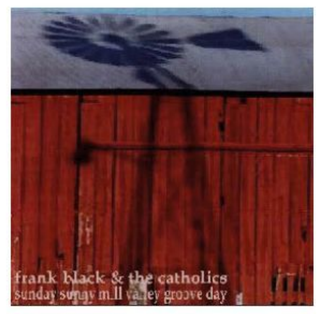
SPIRIT OF THE CLASH

Dalgety arranged the album's running order, while Pixies' new label Infectious chose the relatively calm *On Graveyard Hill* as its first single. "It seems a lot simpler and truer to your identity to just care about the music part and not so much about things like the album cover, what the single is, what the video is going to be," reasons Francis. "We've always been fairly casual like that. When we started, we were just motivated to be a band. 'Would you like to work with such-and-such a producer?' 'Sounds great, let's do it!' It's not that we don't care – we do, we insist on artistic freedom. But we're not control freaks about every single aspect. So long as you hire people you genuinely like and who have more good ideas than bad ideas? Meh, do that. It always seems easier to us."

This eminently sensible approach confuses fans who think bands should obsess over every tiny detail. But Francis explains: "You have to let people do what they do to get the most out of them, rather than try to control everything. We've tried it out to see what it's like, but it's just exhausting. It doesn't seem to amount to much anyway. 'I really want that song to be the single! Come on! Rrraaaah!' And then on the next album, you see it had no impact and you go, 'What was all that about?' It's all stress."

Where Francis is willing to get stressed is trying to improve his voice. Mention how great his vocals are on rockabilly strut *St Nazaire* on the new album, and for once Black Francis looks a little pained. "I like that song, but I struggle with it when we perform it," he sighs. "It's got the blown-out spirit of The Clash doing *Brand New Cadillac*, but I don't feel I've achieved what I'd like it to be. Maybe I'm thinking about it too much, if people like you are saying 'It's great!'. I just know when I perform it that I want to beat the recorded version. I don't know if I will – but it'll be fun trying." Over 30 years into an authentically strange ride, Pixies know fine well where the importance and the fun can be found. ●

Beneath The Eyrie is out on 13 September. Pixies tour from 13-26 September



Catholic Education

In between *Trompe Le Monde* and *Indie Cindy*, Black Francis released 17 albums, either solo, with Frank Black And The Catholics or as Paley & Francis with The Five singer Reid Paley. An additional 18th album came in 2000, when Frank Black And The Catholics' *Sunday Sunny Mill Valley Groove Day* was scrapped at the last minute, as Francis was unhappy with its recording. He subsequently gave away CDs at Catholics gigs, with the album (not his best) freely available as a bootleg.

Francis also produced Art Brut's 2009 album *Art Brut Vs Satan*, but he's said he's unlikely to make further albums away from Pixies, as it takes up too much time. His extra-curricular creativity instead goes into painting.

Nine of Francis' albums remain unreleased on vinyl, while everything between 1996's *The Cult Of Ray* and 2006's *Christmass*, which did make it to vinyl, sells for £55-£65. The vinyl edition of Francis' 2010 soundtrack for 1920 silent film *The Golem* generally fetches an even more wince-inducing £110.

At least the first two post-Pixies albums as Frank Black – *Frank Black* and *Teenager Of The Year* – were reissued on vinyl this year, so are cheap and freely available. Otherwise, someone needs to sort a reissue campaign and quick.

ETHAN MILLER/GETTY

[PIAS] ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BEAR TREE SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRAS
PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY •
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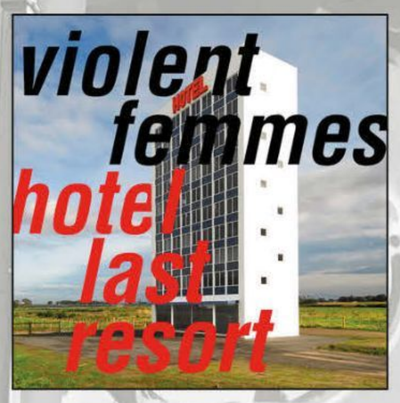


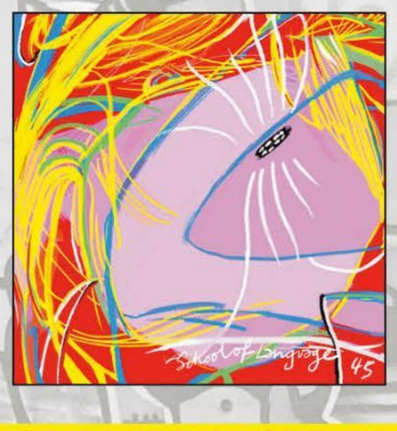
VIOLENT FEMMES
HOTEL LAST RESORT
[PIAS] Recordings

SERATONES
POWER
New West

CABARET VOLTAIRE
CHANCE VERSUS CAUSALITY
Mute

NÉRIJA
BLUME
Domino Records

MAPS
WE CAN CREATE
Mute



SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE
45
Memphis Industries

EZRA FURMAN
TWELVE NUDES
Bella Union

MODERN NATURE
HOW TO LIVE
Bella Union

JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT
LIVE AT TWIST & SHOUT 11.16.07
New West

RIDE
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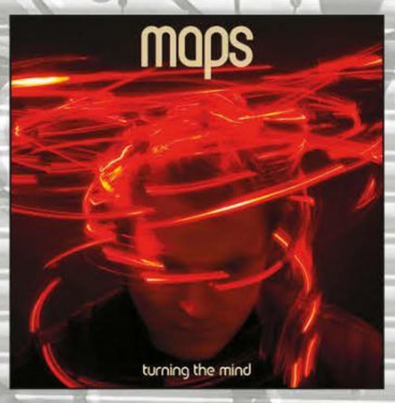

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KINGS OF THRASH

Infest The Rats' Nest is King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's 14th album in nine years. It's also by a distance their heaviest: a thrash metal assault that's wildly different from the boogie-heavy *Fishing For Fishies*, released in April. **Daniel Dylan Wray** meets the Australian band's frontman Stu Mackenzie to find out how they keep up their prodigious output and whether there are more releases coming in 2019...

OSCILLATOR 1
OSCILLATOR 4
DUAL DELAY
CHORUS

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard frontman and songwriter Stu Mackenzie has a way with understatement. "I'm not very good at relaxing," he tells *Long Live Vinyl*. Since forming in Melbourne in 2010, the band – who fuse an ever-shifting mix of garage rock, psychedelia, prog and experimentation – have released an eye-watering 14 albums and two EPs. Famously, they released five in 2017 alone, and in 2019 they are already on their second of the year. The first, *Fishing For Fishies*, was an LP that took in blues rock, boogie, whimsical folk-pop, glam stomp and even a touch of electronic pop. It was an eclectic record, even for a band with eclecticism at their very core.

Their follow-up, however, is much more sonically coherent. It's pretty much a straight-up heavy metal record. *Infest The Rats' Nest* is a spewing ball of screeching guitar riffs, clattering drums and guttural vocals. "We didn't sit down and say, 'Let's make a metal record'," Mackenzie says. "But I think we did say: 'Let's make the fastest, loudest and heaviest record we've ever made'. We were thinking about that a lot."

The result speaks for itself. It certainly is the fastest, loudest and heaviest record King Gizzard have ever made. That said, the band's knack for melody underpins the monster riffs, and while it's certainly metal in tone, it also retains an accessibility that the band have always had, despite what new or unpredictable direction they travel in. *Mars For The Rich* is pure 80s thrash, but there's also a pop swagger and charm that struts alongside it. Besides, even if it's not always been obvious, metal has played a role in the band for years now.

"In terms of the metal vibe, for us it's been a recurring theme through quite a few of our records," Mackenzie offers. "Even though our early records were more garage and psych, a bunch of us did grow up listening to heavy and thrash metal – so it's seeped its way in." For Mackenzie, it came via Rammstein at school. "As a suggestible 11-year-old boy, that made an impact on me. When you're that age, there isn't that amount of broad music that filters down. I just remember thinking, 'This is completely insane and so unique'. That started a progression of discovering things."

The change in direction is also a direct response to their previous album. "Many of our records are a reaction to the previous one," he says. "After making *Fishing For Fishies* and working on that for a long time, it was like, 'Fuck me I need to get loud'. It's just the push-pull of making music. When you're recording, you spend a lot of time making a record, and I feel like you need to balance that by then doing something that is the opposite."

Most bands don't release a blues-glam-psych-pop record and a full-on metal assault within months of one another, though. So how do the group reach a consensus on where to go next? How does everyone arrive on the same page? "It's mostly a case of me throwing out a lot of ideas and then trying to get a feel for what people are into," he says. "We have a lot

of songs and demos that are really disparate, don't fit and are just weird, bizarre or have a different feel. I like to get a feel from everyone else what they are vibing on and focus on that."

For most bands, there's something of a formula at play: write and record an album, tour it for a year or 18 months and then go back and make another record. Albums come to define periods of years for some bands, as they hammer them out night after night until they become soaked into their skin and bones. What impact does it have on the personal relationship of an artist and their albums when they unleash so many in such a short space of time and move on quickly from each one?

"I'm still really proud of everything that we've made," Mackenzie says, reflecting on that extensive catalogue. "When I think back on records I may think, 'Oh I wish I'd recorded this differently or done this differently', but records are a relic of a time period that have memories attached to them that become immovable. I think of records like a little time capsule: something that I would be unable to unlock memories about if it wasn't for the music. That's beautiful in a really personal and kind of selfish way that doesn't actually relate to anybody else. That's my personal relationship to all our music."

NEW OBSESSIONS

It also suits Mackenzie's personality type to focus on something intently for a period and then move onto something else to spend time on. "I think I can get quite a narrow-minded focus," he offers. "I think I'm obsessive. Once something becomes the obsession, it lasts for a while and I can't move on from things until I've followed it through. Once I feel like I've made something I can, with all my heart and happiness, move on and feel satisfied and think about something new."

This need to move on and find new obsessions and genres to explore has resulted in the band having an audience that acts as the antithesis of many others. By moving at such breakneck speed and hurtling through genres as quickly as albums, it means the band's audiences always arrive with a sense of the unknown. "I'd hope that people don't have too many expectations when they come to the show," he says. "I think when you have expectations, you're setting yourself up to be let down. I've been guilty of that. I've seen heroes of mine who have played songs that aren't my favourite and it's been a bit like, what a bummer. I have to remind myself – oh that's what I probably do." Mackenzie, though, feels the notable absence of a hit single or particular song King Gizzard are known for has aided this attitude. "Maybe we're lucky in a way that we don't really have hits. I think that works in our favour. I would find it troubling if we had a hit. It would throw me."

While the band think carefully about their audience when constructing a show or a setlist, this mindset doesn't apply in the studio. "It's not helpful," he explains. "Once you start

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Tongue on cheek: Mackenzie in high-octane live action at Bonnaroo festival in Manchester, Tennessee

thinking like that, you'll get a creative block. You have to let your mind be the boss and live inside your own head and try to have no fear. It's easier said than done, but that's always been the modus operandi for us." For Mackenzie, it's never a problem if the audience likes some records and not others, because that often mirrors his relationship to music. "I don't necessarily have favourite artists or songs, but I have favourite records. I like records that feel like they are of a moment and that they capture something that is tangible and has a feel."

This love of the album as a complete and finished format even infiltrates every process of the songwriting process for Mackenzie, who only ever sees the finished album in his sights. "My brain is wired up to make things in a certain way and that is to make albums," he offers. "I think about songs but I mostly think about a collection of songs. When I'm making music I'm always making albums, I'm almost never making a song. It feels weird just to make a song. Making songs is just like making brothers and sisters for your other songs to become a family as an album. You're finishing a painting rather than making a whole bunch of separate ones." For that reason alone, Mackenzie sees these albums – despite how seemingly varied they are – to all have a connecting relationship: "I think all the albums are related closely in my mind."

DIRE STRAITS

Another connecting theme that runs through much of the band's work is the environment and its continuing collapse. Lyrically, it features once again on this record, and as things get worse it's something that Mackenzie can't help but write about.

"It is really dire," he says. "It's never been more dire. It's definitely getting worse, but things have felt dire for ages now. I usually read a lot of books and watch a lot of movies, but over the last year or two I've read a lot less and become a lot more involved in what is going on in the real world rather than just reading fiction – listening to a lot of podcasts and reading a lot of news. So these last two records have just become a lot more current real world and near-future kind of things – less demons and monsters. This record is mostly talking about the kind of things that we just talk about as a band. Things that we've been shooting the shit on lately."

Does it leave him hopeful for the future? "No, not really," he says resignedly. "It depends on what your version of hopeful is. I don't think we're heading towards some kind of futuristic human utopia. People forget that so much has already been lost; if you think about some of the biggest mass extinctions on the planet throughout history, there's already so much that has gone, so many forests being logged. The amount already lost is staggering. It's hard to be an optimist when there's already been so much death. It's an extreme example, but if you were in the middle of World War Two and someone came to you and said, 'Are you an optimist?' I don't think you could be because there's already been so much death even if the war ends. It's not a happy ending under any circumstances."

Despite the tumultuous, often unpredictable times we live in, if there's one thing that's certain it's that King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard will carry on making music. Although they are going to stick at just the two albums in 2019: "I think we can safely say that's it for this year. We'll see how we go next year…" ●

"It feels weird just to make a song. Making songs is like making brothers and sisters for your other songs to become an album"

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OUT ON A LIMB

The sudden rise of the enigmatic WH Lung shows no signs of slowing. **Jonathan Wright** catches up with the band to find out where they're at, and where they're going

Joseph E, WH Lung's angular singer, is a man who likes to throw a shape. In front of a backdrop of dazzling lights at the Sea Change Festival in Totnes, where WH Lung are playing a storming afternoon set, it's something encapsulated by the moment where, even as his bandmates create a cacophonous noise behind him, he stops dancing. Instead, he stretches out to balance on one leg, a move that looks as though it belongs in the yoga room rather than on the stage.

One wobble and it could all so easily go horribly wrong. Then again, the idea of things potentially going awry seems central to why he does this. It's a way to open himself up to the audience, to be in the moment.

"Have you heard of Hofesh Shechter?" Joseph asks when he speaks to *LLV* after the show, namechecking the Israeli choreographer and, in particular, Shechter's dystopian *Grand Finale*, a work that tackles political and ecological disaster. "I'm just watching that, taking notes on the moves, stealing all the moves," he adds. "There's this feral vulnerability with all the dances, and I think that's what we can achieve now we've played a certain amount of gigs."

It's a lofty and serious ambition, but not one that seems unrealistic considering how 2019 has so far shaken out for WH Lung – named after a Chinese supermarket, since you're asking. At the beginning of the year, few had even heard of the Manchester-based band. Then came the release of debut album *Incidental Music* in April, an LP that's being re-pressed because the first batch of vinyl copies long ago sold out.

The reviews were glowing. And no wonder. It's a debut that finds a shimmering sweet spot between krautrock, LCD Soundsystem and more overtly commercial 80s synth pop via long, drawn-out songs that have the dynamic push and pull of the best psych bands. Somehow, WH Lung have arrived without anyone having the time to have a chat about how they'd set out in the first place.

POST-PUNK ROOTS

It's an impressive trick except, of course, nothing is ever that straightforward. In reality, WH Lung's core trio – Joseph

Conceived initially as a studio project, WH Lung have known each other since school

(vocals and keyboards), Tom S (guitar and keyboards) and Tom P (bass and keyboards), joined by drummer Alex and guitarist Chris live – have known each other since they were teenagers in Greater Manchester. In their early 20s, when Tom S and Joseph were living across the Pennines in Leeds, things started to coalesce into a more serious musical project.

"We played a lot of soul-destroying shows to not many people," says Tom P, who moved north again after time in London to join up with his old friends. As to what this earlier iteration of the band was even called, all concerned steadfastly refuse to say, in keeping with an enigmatic public presence that excludes even surnames. The following may offer some clues to anyone who cares to look into this matter further with the help of Google or local knowledge.

"We thought we were post-punk," says Joseph. "I had the boots and the straight-cut trousers. It was scuzzy, and we'd play anywhere and everywhere, whatever gig we could get booked on. I think our second-ever gig was with Ought [post-punk rockers from Montreal], which was like, 'We're playing with Ought!' We loved Ought. That was probably the apotheosis of our post-punk career."

It was time to rethink matters. One song in particular pointed a way forward. "The first single that we released as WH Lung, *Inspiration!*, we wrote that in this old band," explains Tom P. "And I thought that was what we should have been doing the entire time. And so we used that as a marker." Now based back in Manchester, in a house in Chorlton, WH Lung began to take shape. "The approach that we had to it was we lived together, we had a room in the house where we recorded demos and stuff," says Tom S.

When *Inspiration!* was shared online, it came to the attention of Manchester-based Melodic Records. "We went to their office and we'd had times before where labels had shown an interest and it'd turned out to be a false start," says Tom P. "We weren't getting our hopes up and, miraculously, it's all worked out pretty good."

"If you don't expect anything to happen, you're not disappointed," adds Tom S. "Before we'd done a gig, they said, 'Do you want to do End Of The Road?' We were like, 'yeah!'"

A NEW IDENTITY

Many bands would have immediately sought to capitalise on such initial success, but as WH Lung look back, there's a strong sense they realised they weren't then ready. "When we were getting the first festival bookings, we didn't have enough material to fill the set, so at that point we didn't have too much time to think because we had to write," remembers Tom S. So is the length of WH Lung's songs partly down to filling time? "Yeah, draw it out," he laughs. "There was one set where we actually did three songs."

You can find video footage of WH Lung playing live in September 2017 at End Of The Road festival on YouTube. It's brilliant, but there's a sense that you're watching a band reaching but not quite there, all of which makes the way they recorded *Incidental Music* particularly intriguing.

Working with the Leeds-based producer Matt Peel over a period of two years, WH Lung gradually laid down the songs that make up the LP, a long enough time that Joseph describes it as "a log of our musical explorations up until now" and not one, he adds, that the band even necessarily planned to put out as a collection. "We listened to all these songs together, and it's like, 'This does sound like an album'," Joseph says. "Fortune favoured us in that respect."

Partly because of this, the songs cover a lot of ground emotionally. If *Inspiration!* was Joseph looking out at the world and making a comment on "the inability within our political system to have any meaningful debate", other songs are more introspective.

By his own account, Joseph is a magpie of a lyricist, a man who happily pinches lines from favourite writers. *Nothing Is*, for example, plays with the idea, which Joseph found in a Zadie Smith novel, that "God is a verb". "Within that, I was seeing what was happening with that particular line in that particular song, and that was existential turmoil," he says.

"I had such a time, I had an existential meltdown. I think Albert Camus called it the absurd walls, when you think, 'What the fuck is going on?' And I had that beautiful adolescent vulnerability, where you think, 'Why is everyone not screaming? What is happening?' And so I was writing that song through that."

FRONTING UP

Joseph often says things like this. Which is to say he's disarmingly open, a natural frontman and, in the nicest possible way, a bit of a show-off. "I *love* playing live," he notes at one point in our interview. "The songs have a different energy because there's more at

Vocalist Joseph E is also a dab hand with a paintbrush and designed his band's debut album sleeve

OFF THE BONE

WH Lung's *Incidental Music* was released as a Dinked Edition, one of a number of indie store-only vinyl releases that are fast becoming highly collectible. Signed and numbered by the band, the edition consisted of 400 copies on bone-coloured vinyl. As we went to press, there was a copy on Discogs for £57.

stake, you can feel into each different section in a different way."

In contrast, Tom P comes across as slightly wary when *LLV* chats with the two Toms at Bristol's Louisiana venue a few days before the Sea Change show. "I wasn't a good student, but not out of recklessness, more out of boredom," he says when asked about his school days. Tom S has a gentler presence than his colleagues and works a day job in "pastoral support" at one of Manchester's universities.

The dynamic between their three personalities has clearly worked as WH Lung have honed their sound, but in terms of the band's working process, things seem to be changing. "For our second record, we definitely want to do it more thematically and conventionally," says Tom P.

The idea of "writing round a drum machine," to use Tom P's description, is beginning to give way to coming up with songs in rehearsal. "I think that's a good measure, that as a band you can write a song live," says Joseph.

With more live dates in the pipeline, Joseph in particular appears to be embracing a step-change in activity. "I think we're quite keen to get in a studio and put ourselves under some pressure, see what happens there," he says. "It's just about exploring different avenues. I don't necessarily mean pressure to write something that will follow this up in a *grand* sense, but *building*. I just want the opportunity to keep going with it, to keep doing this with my mates and have a good time playing live."

WH Lung's vocalist has recently given up gainful employment in order to focus fully on music. "I've recently quit my job with the intention of saying, 'This is it now, let's absolutely commit to this'," he confirms. "It's exciting to do that and the pressure is exciting – and the stupidity of that is exciting, to say, 'Fuck it, it's all I've got now', to pour ourselves into it, to see what happens, to see where we are in a year's time if we are properly diligent."

Joseph is, he adds, reading more poetry for inspiration, and writing it, too. "I've got a lot more time to write and make mistakes," he says. "You've got to write a lot of bollocks before you get something good out, that's what I've found, so I've got notebooks and notebooks that I should probably throw away for all the humiliation they might cause me. But I'll write a song, and I'll write it again, and I'll write it again, and it's this editing-down process."

In the autumn, WH Lung play Berlin. Joseph may just stick around there, find a place to live, like an artist friend who "moved without a plan" but was "fine". Or he may move to somewhere smaller, like Totnes, that's "parochial but vibe-y".

But all that's for the future. For now at least, WH Lung are still operating at the level where they need to pack their own gear, so he's off to help. He disappears into the distance across the festival field, loping away. A little over an hour previously, *Long Live Vinyl* had watched a pair of cynical Gig Goers Of A Certain Age smirking at Joseph's Ian Curtis dancing and his choreography-inspired shapes. They left the show as converts. "He owned the stage," said one. His friend agreed. Actually, WH Lung as a whole owned the stage, but you take his point. ●

WH Lung's debut album, Incidental Music, is out now through Melodic Records

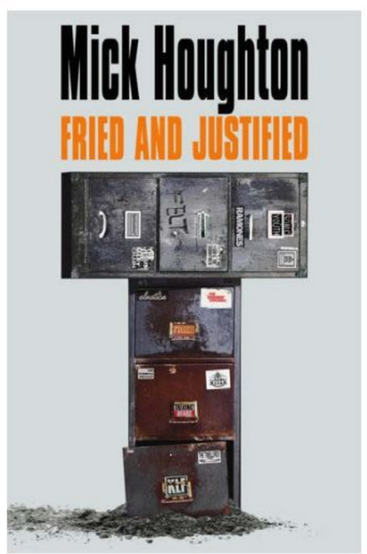
MY LIFE IN VINYL

Mick Houghton

There are very few doomy, dysfunctional post-punk guitar bands that publicist Mick Houghton hasn't worked with over the course of his illustrious career. **Gary Tipp** checks in

Mick Houghton's new book *Fried & Justified* skilfully navigates the minefields of inter-band rivalries and contrasting fortunes that he encountered during his many years working as a publicist. Subtitled not so succinctly, *Hits, Myths, Break-Ups And Breakdowns In The Record Business, 1978-98*, the publication is a witty and insightful tale that lifts the lid not only on the bands he worked with, but also the changing landscape of the music business.

Throughout the course of the book, Mick's proud belief is that the music always comes first, and talking to him about the bands that remain close to his heart it's a statement that still rings indefatigably true with him. Towards the end of the conversation, Mick started to feel a degree of guilt for all the legions of bands we forced him to leave out by limiting him to a mere 10 album highlights – and so here is a list of honourable mentions for bands and artists that didn't make the final cut: Felt, That Petrol Emotion, Stereolab, Bert Jansch, The Rezillos, Gorky's Zygotic Mynci ("Euro Childs could well have been a genius too"), Suicide, The House Of Love, Dinosaur Jr, Sun Ra and many others.



With a foreword by Bill Drummond, Mick Houghton's *Fried & Justified* is published by Faber & Faber and out now from wherever you get your books

Talking Heads
MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD

Sire
1978

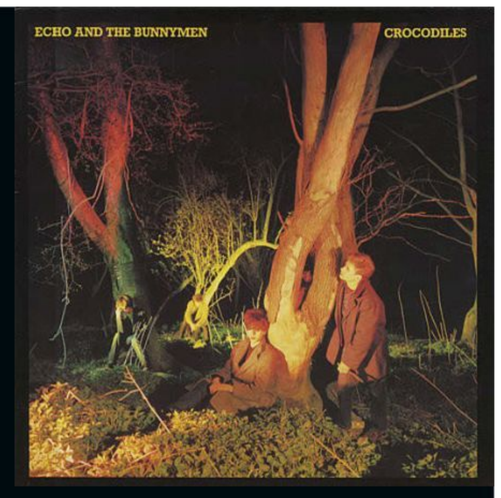
Ramones
ROAD TO RUIN

Sire
1978

"I went to work at WEA on a freelance basis for four weeks as an in-house writer. That month, Seymour Stein sold half of Sire to Warners and I was asked to join as a press officer. I knew the Ramones had an LP due and the second Talking Heads album was coming. It seemed too good an opportunity to miss. For me, these two bands came as a package, which is why I don't want to separate them here.

"The Ramones were the key Sire band for the first three albums. *Road To Ruin* was their fourth album in two and half years and it wasn't well received. The moment had passed, particularly in terms of the press. The fans were still perfectly happy to see them play. Talking Heads, on the other hand, were the critics' favourites. The bands were going in two different directions. The Ramones had stuck to the formula, but the leap from *77* to *More Songs About Buildings And Food* was a huge progression. Talking Heads always seemed to be a band in transition, always looking to move forward – while the Ramones were left chasing a hit that never really came. As with many of the bands I worked with, there was dysfunction. There was a clear antipathy between Joey and Johnny that only got worse over the years. And a rift between David and Tina that changed from grumbling behind the scenes to grumbling openly in the press."

Echo & The Bunnymen
CROCODILES



Korova
1980

"It could have been any of the first four Bunnymen albums, but *Crocodiles* is important to me. It's a remarkable debut album with a near-perfect sequence of songs. You hadn't really heard anything like it before. The cover is incredible and adds a certain sense of mystery and allure to the band. I always got quite frustrated when journalists used to say they sounded like The Doors, just because Ian McCulloch had a great voice. They didn't sound like them, and they never did.

"The Bunnymen weren't great musicians when they made *Crocodiles*, but somehow they pulled it all together and producers Bill Drummond and Dave Balfe got performances out of them that were far greater than they thought themselves capable of. The album's sound is a bit thin compared to follow-up *Heaven Up Here*. The Bunnymen were often arrogant and dismissive in their press interviews, but were also wracked with self-doubt. It was a curious mix.

"There was a time in 1980 when over the period of a month The Bunnymen and The Teardrop Explodes were both working on their debut albums at Rockfield Studios.

"*Crocodiles* remains important to me, as in the space of a few months I met all these remarkable people and 20 years later I was still working with them. It was during this time I left WEA and set up on my own. My life would have been completely different without working with The Bunnymen. To be involved was extraordinary."

The Undertones
HYPNOTISED

Sire
1980

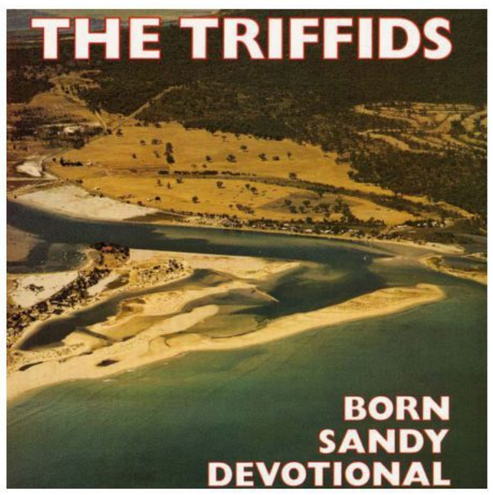
"Along with the Ramones and Talking Heads, the other two bands I first worked with at Sire were The Undertones and The Rezillos, who split up after one album on the label. The Undertones managed to cut across musical trends and barriers. They were a fantastic live band and shared an amazing rapport with their fans. Feargal, who is now judged by the music he went on to make, had a great command of the audience as a frontman and with John O'Neill in their ranks they possessed a gifted songwriter. Nobody in the band could understood why everybody loved *Teenage Kicks* so much, and all thought there were much better songs on their first record.

"*Hypnotised* was such a step forward. *More Songs About Chocolate And Girls* was a nod to Talking Heads, *Wednesday Week* is a great song and *My Perfect Cousin* is smart. The Undertones were absolutely the most universally loved of all the bands I've ever worked with, which seemed to be tied up with a strange perception of innocence, naivety and trousers worn at half-mast. John always thought people felt sorry for them because they came from Derry. In terms of the music, they were desperate to move on, but it was as though people wouldn't allow them to grow up. Again, The Undertones weren't without their own set of inter-band tensions and the niggle between John and Feargal was always there."

The Triffids
BORN SANDY DEVOTIONAL

Hot
1986

"When The Triffids came over from Australia in 1984, The Teardrop Explodes were over and The Bunnymen were about to go on a gap year. They were such a tonic. I'd been given a copy of the first album, *Treeless Plain*, which is a great record. When they arrived, nobody had heard of them, they weren't even well known back home. For many Australian bands, for example The Birthday Party and The Go-Betweens, success in England gives them a strong sense of validation, and it was the same for the Triffids. They arrived at the end of August and had return tickets booked for Christmas. They played a dozen gigs and proved to be a great live band. A lot of the songs on *Born Sandy Devotional* were written during this period and dealt with a longing for home. When they came back to record the album they were stuck in a studio on the Clerkenwell Road and no doubt again afflicted by homesickness. It's one of those great records with a collection of wonderful songs written by David McComb. He loved country music and was a big fan of Laura Nyro and Leonard Cohen. *Calenture* could have been even better, but fell foul of being covered in that horrible 1980s production sheen."



The Jesus & Mary Chain
DARKLANDS

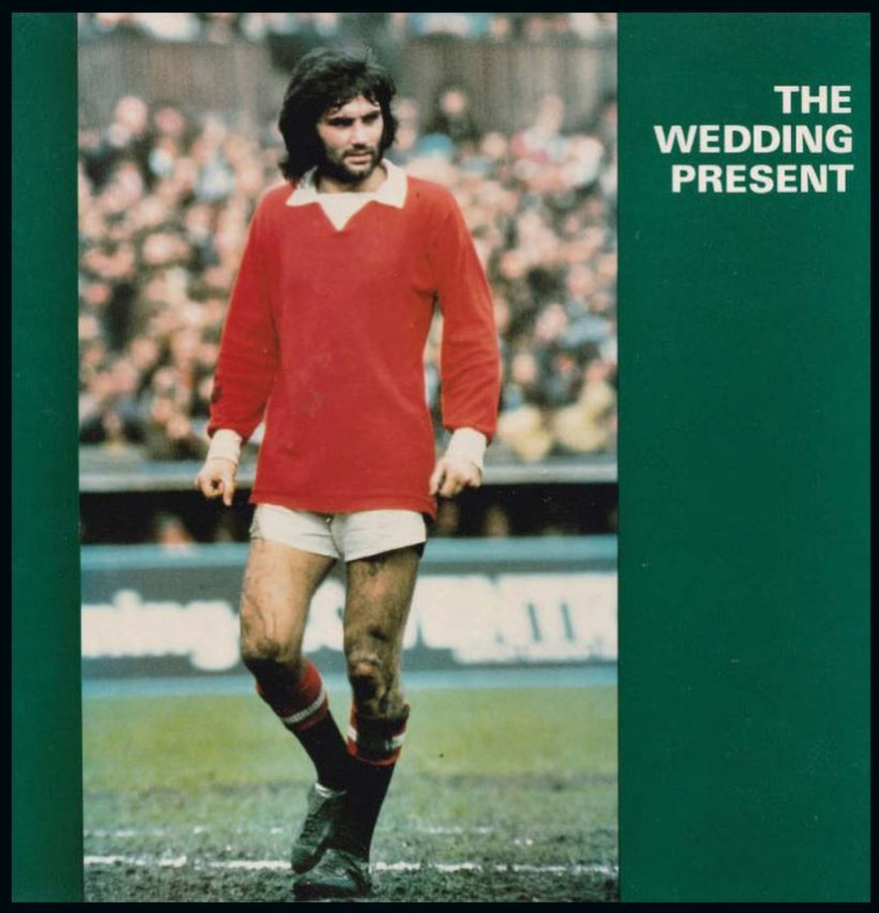
Blanco Y Negro
1987

"I was brought in by Warners at the time of the second single *You Trip Me Up*. I'm not sure they thought they could handle them, so they asked me. I worked on *Psychocandy*, which is a fantastic debut, but I prefer *Darklands*. I admired the fact that when everybody wanted 'Psychocandy 2' they made a completely different sounding record. It chronicled their disappointment about being part of this corporate music machine that they hated. Other than making the records, they hated everything about it.

"For many groups, it's a shock when you join a major label, you sign thinking these people must know what they're doing and must like music, and then suddenly it's not like that. Jim and William were quite shocked about how quickly they became a commodity. *Darklands* is such a downbeat album. They didn't like doing interviews, they didn't like photo shoots, they didn't like anything. But they weren't the bolshie people they had the reputation as being. A lot of that was down to how Alan McGee had marketed them as the new Sex Pistols.

"They were quiet, introverted guys. *Darklands* is a reaction to all that. It's such a different-sounding recording to the first. It's a very Stonesy-sounding album. It wasn't so well received. I thought the Mary Chain were victimised by people who assumed they were like the image they swept in on. The Stone Roses and Oasis were far worse behaved, but they knew how to handle the media and turned it to their advantage."

"As a band, they were more of a Nat Lofthouse: short hair with shirt tucked in"



The Wedding Present
GEORGE BEST

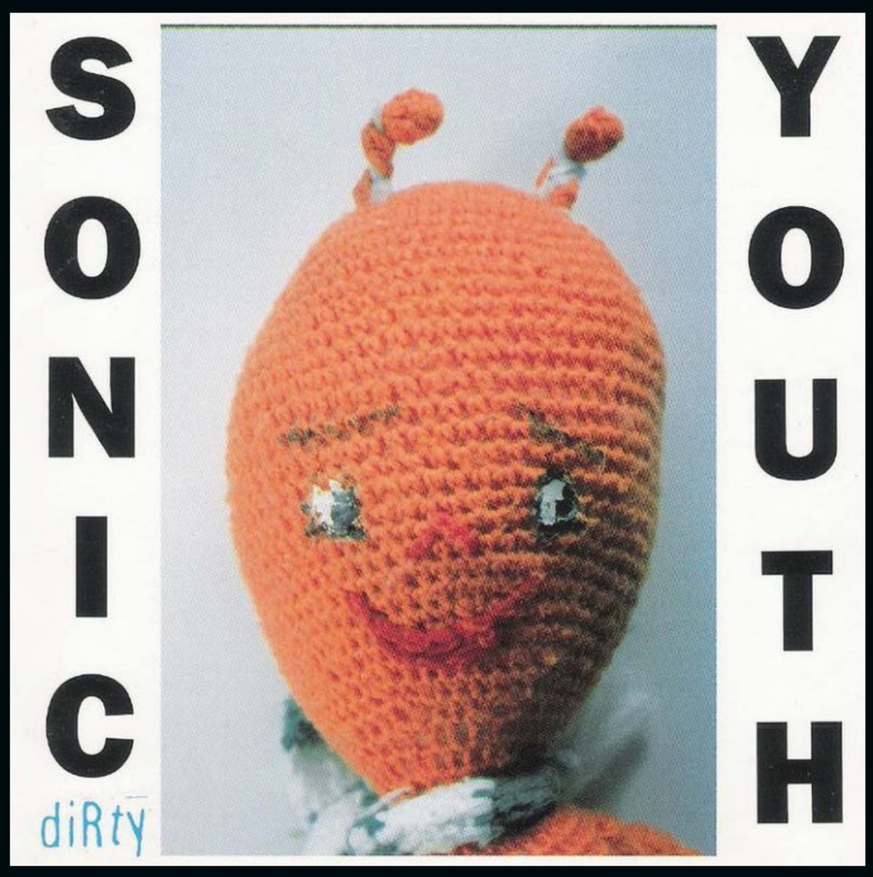
Reception
1987

"The Wedding Present's early singles were scratchy indie fare and didn't do a lot for me. Seeing them live made a lot more sense. They didn't appear on the covers of their singles or albums and the classic George Best image was a smart move, which worked better than they ever imagined. To my knowledge, they weren't exactly the biggest football fans, David Gedge just thought it was a good name for an album. It was all quite inspired. In truth, you'd never associate The Wedding Present with George Best. As a band, they were more of a Nat Lofthouse: short hair, shirt tucked in. Best as a player was the antithesis of what The Wedding Present were about.

"With the 12 songs on the album sounding pretty much the same, people started relating to the lyrics, and David has this everyman touch. John Peel loved them as well, which was important. It was about this time that The Smiths vacated out of the indie ghetto and The Wedding Present swiftly moved in. They became the band the indie kids loved.

"They were really smart. I was used to working with high-maintenance bands where everything was done for them. The Wedding Present were never indulged or pampered, they were really down to earth. They'd always do press. To me, they're a bit like the Grateful Dead. Constantly touring, always releasing live albums, and their merchandising is brilliant. They give back to their fans something month in, month out. The boring tag often given to them isn't justified. Just because they don't act like Julian Cope doesn't make them boring."

Signing to a major label gave Sonic Youth a platform for their art-pop noise



Sonic Youth
DIRTY

Geffen
1992

"I got a call from Paul Smith who runs the Blast Forward label asking if I'd work with Dinsoaur Jr, the Butthole Surfers and Sonic Youth. It was a weird time. I was brought in and then they left the label six months later and signed to Geffen. I didn't feel as though I had any relationship with them at all and the only record I worked with them on for Blast First was *The Whitey Album*. They were quite difficult and I found them to act a bit superior in some ways. I was really surprised when I got the phone call to carry on doing their press. I think Geffen in the UK didn't know what to do with them. So, they kept me on, I felt bad about it but Paul told me to carry on.

"I love Sonic Youth's music. I went back and listened to *Sister* and *Evol*, both great albums. They gave indie music in the UK a much-needed shake, as we were in the grip of a legion of average post-C86 guitar bands. Sonic Youth were the antithesis of that. Signing to a major gave them a populist platform and, when *Dirty* came out, they used Butch Vig as producer. It's easily their most successful album, but it's still a Sonic Youth album. It's got *Youth Against Fascism* on it, as well as *100%* and *Sugar Kane*. They actually had hit records, which was all unheard of. *Dirty* was a top five album. I got to know them a bit at a time, but sometimes working with American bands just means you don't get to know them that well."

"Sonic Youth gave indie music in the UK a much-needed shake"

The Justified Ancients Of Mu Mu
SHAG TIMES

KLF Communications
1989

"This compilation album reflects the first 12 months of the JAMS, when they made such an impact. I don't think the KLF made a great album, so I opted for this. It includes the single *Whitney Joins The JAMS*, by far the best example of what they were doing. I was used to working with doomy guitar bands, so this was exciting, certainly something I've never been part of before. I'd known Bill Drummond for a while and I knew working with him wasn't going to be dull. To be honest, when I first heard the lead single, *All You Need Is Love*, I didn't understand it. I didn't get what they were trying to do. Nearly everybody in the music press knew that King Boy D, the ranting/raving Clydeside builder, was really Bill, but they were very happy to go along with it. The year was incredible. I tried to be reactive to whatever they did. The music press was obsessed with them. They went five months under the radar before the sampling police caught up with them. They knew they couldn't get away with it forever. Things just fell into place. ABBA sued them. Now, if anybody is going to have good lawyers it's going to be ABBA. For me, *Shag Times* represents the best they did, and, appropriately, it ends with the first KLF single, *Burn The Bastards*."

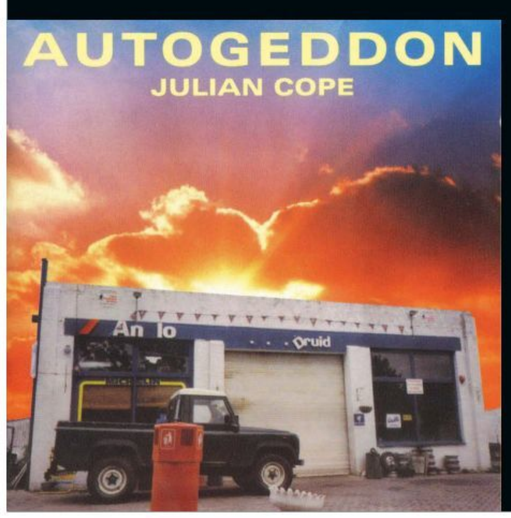
EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS/GETTY

Spiritualized's Jason Pierce defied Mick Houghton's expectations of him

Julian Cope
AUTOGEDDON

Echo
1994

"With no disrespect meant to anybody else I've worked with, and it's a word I hardly ever use, Julian is the one person who I'd say is a genius – a very wayward genius and a self-destructing genius, but a genius nonetheless. Early on, Julian was pilloried for his solo career. *Fried*, which is regarded as a classic album now, was slaughtered in the press. The turtle-shell cover didn't help. It's how people wanted to perceive him. Forming part of his visionary 1990s trilogy, *Autogeddon* is overlooked, perhaps not as strong overall as *Jehovahkill* but I have a real fondness for it. It tends to get forgotten, as Julian's *Head-On* autobiography was published the month after and it trumped the album. Julian's always been an extraordinary person to know and to work with. I've always found it so frustrating to see him dismissed as an acid-taking nutter. Much of *Autogeddon* is Julian ranting about the car industry and its impact on the environment, which was ironic as its release coincided with him passing his driving test."



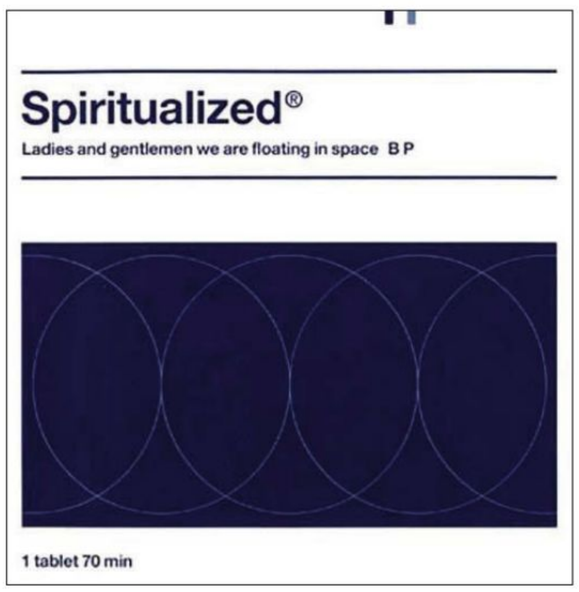
Spiritualized
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN WE ARE FLOATING IN SPACE

Dedicated
1997

"Yet another example of stumbling into something. The previous albums hadn't done much for me, and when we were asked to work with Spiritualized I wasn't sure. A lot of friends and journalists had told me that Jason was an absolute nightmare to work with, which in a way made me want to work with him even more. So, not being at all convinced as to whether I wanted to work with him or not, I met Jason and soon discovered that he isn't the person that everybody had told me about. Just like Julian Cope, he's a well brought up middle-class kid, who just happens to take loads of drugs. We started to talk about music, spent an afternoon together and just clicked. Jason is very smart. He doesn't say much, and what he does say is considered.

"I went into the studio when they were working out the strings for the album and also the gospel choir, it was amazing. A year later, the album's out – it's never quick with Jason – and it is amazing, and so is the cover. The artwork is incredible. The most perfect concept, and from a PR point of view it was spot on.

"Most albums have a three-to-four months lifespan, but *Ladies And Gentlemen…* just kept going and going. It built and built. A brilliant album with an extraordinary indie soap opera back-story to fuel it." ●



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IT'S JUST ROCK 'N' ROLL

25 YEARS OF DEFINITELY MAYBE

From the moment Oasis were spotted by Creation Records boss Alan McGee as the support act at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut in May 1993, their rise looked unstoppable. Debut album *Definitely Maybe* is a seven-million-selling classic. But, speaking to key contributors, **John Earls** discovers how it could have been so very different...

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY © MICHAEL SPENCER JONES ▸

The smart casual years: (L-R) Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs, Noel, Liam, Paul 'Guigsy' McGuigan, Tony McCarroll

"Oasis were that generation's Beatles." It's hard to argue with Creation head Alan McGee's words. From the moment Oasis swaggered out of Manchester with *Supersonic*, they sounded and crucially looked like the band the post-grunge scene had been heading towards. Suede, Pulp and Blur had laid the groundwork for a band to define the optimism and clarity indie had found for itself. In the Gallagher brothers, Oasis had two sensational personalities, a partnership to rival Lennon & McCartney and Jagger & Richards.

Or so it seems in retrospect. "I never saw it coming," McGee tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "When I initially signed Oasis, I thought maybe they'd nick some of The Stone Roses' audience. I didn't see them as any bigger than that. If we were lucky, we might get a gold disc and Oasis might stick around long enough to make a second album."

Oasis' gigs were sensational. Once the music press caught on, mainly after an incendiary show at industry testing ground pub The Water Rats in King's Cross, the aim was simple: bottle the energy of those concerts, pick any 12 of the 50 songs Noel Gallagher had stored up and see just how many Stone Roses fans could be converted. "Oasis' gigs were so powerful," says Mark Coyle, Noel's friend since they were both Inspiral Carpets roadies. "The gigs were like the album times 10."

At the end of 1993, Oasis began work with The Sensational Alex Harvey Band producer Dave Batchelor at the residential studios Monnow Valley in Monmouthsire. He'd befriended Noel while mixing the Inspirals. "Over a spliff, Noel told Dave, 'If Oasis ever make a record, you'll be producing it'," McGee recalls. "Dave producing the first version of the album was Noel keeping his word." Once in charge, however, Batchelor's old-school methods of recording soon jarred.

MARK COYLE: "Dave was a nice guy, but he was too advanced for what the band were at the time. They were all in separate booths, in isolation from each other with headphones on, and it made for a flat recording. As the session went on, it felt more and more tense, as the band realised it wasn't working."

ALAN MCGEE: "I thought what Dave did was rubbish. Noel was very loyal, saying Dave would get it right next time. I had to tell him, 'We don't have a next time. We have to get it right this time'."

MARK COYLE: "*Slide Away* comes from Dave's sessions, and that's one of the best anthemic love songs ever. The line of Dave getting it right or wrong must have been pretty fine, but the rest of his stuff just didn't represent Oasis. As a complete album, it was a no-no. But there were good moments there, and the songs that became *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* were kicked around and jammed at Monnow Valley."

"WHEN I INITIALLY SIGNED OASIS, I THOUGHT MAYBE THEY'D NICK SOME OF THE STONE ROSES' AUDIENCE" **ALAN MCGEE**

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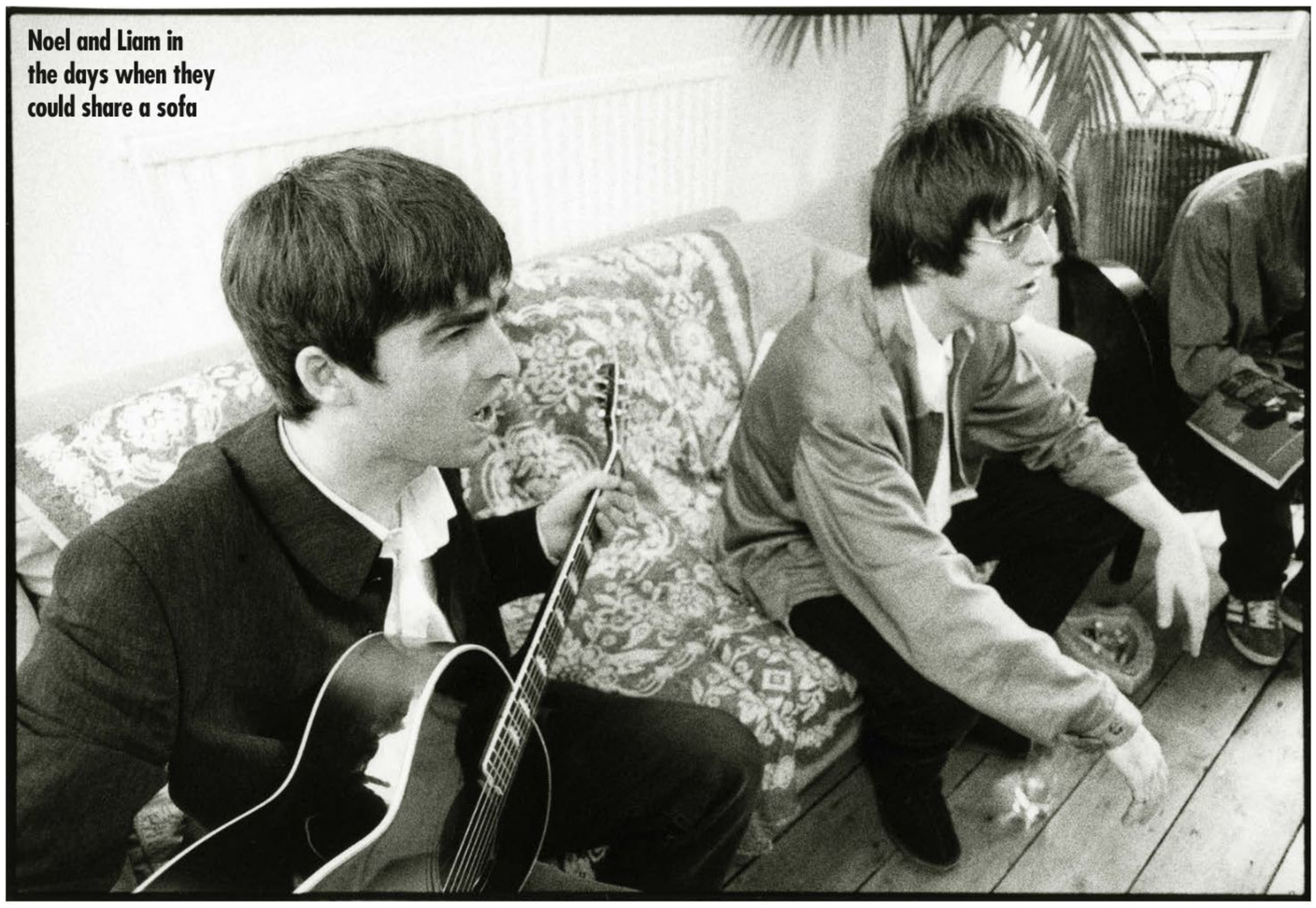


Noel and Liam in the days when they could share a sofa

CHANGE OF PLAN

Over dinner with McGee and Oasis manager Marcus Russell, Noel and Coyle, who had engineered the Dave Batchelor sessions, found themselves asked to take over as producers.

MARK COYLE: "I give Alan a lot of credit for trusting me and Noel to get it right. Being passed the reins on that record, when you don't really know what you're doing, was a funny situation to be in. For a band of that potential, you'd think you'd want a producer with a long track record. But we'd tried that with Dave Batchelor and it had been horrible, just alien for everyone. We wanted it the way we understood it from Oasis' gigs: just the band and me. I'd recorded their gigs from day one."

ALAN MCGEE: "When it didn't work out with Dave, I wasn't as worried as maybe I should have been. I thought, 'OK, let's just put Coyley in there'. Mark played as big a part as anybody on *Definitely Maybe*, because he had the trust of the band. Having that band trust you was a big deal. And once we put Anjali Dutt in there to engineer it, it wasn't a risk. Anjali is a genius."

Having worked with Spacemen 3 and Swervedriver, Anjali Dutt had engineered the mammoth sessions for My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless*. Since then, she'd worked with Creation acts from The Boo Radleys to 18 Wheeler.

ANJALI DUTT: "I came on board to a really, really weird situation at the end of the Dave Batchelor sessions. I went to Olympic Studios in Barnes, having been told, 'Listen to it and tell us if you think it can be saved'. I got there to see a lot of anxious men, putting up faders, asking me, 'What do you think?' I wasn't sure what answer I was meant to give, so I was just honest and said, 'Why don't you cut your losses and start again?' Which, fortunately, seemed to be what they wanted to hear. It was clear there were a lot of hopes for this record; that it wasn't a typical indie album. So Oasis started again, except this time, we had to go to Cornwall."

BE KERNOW

In January 1994, Oasis decamped to Sawmills Studios in Cornwall. Another residential studio, where The Verve had recorded *A Storm In Heaven* the previous year, it was so remote that the nearest pub was only accessible via walking along train lines. It was easier to ship kegs of beer over on a boat, which could only be sailed when the tide was in. Housing a group as volatile as Oasis somewhere so remote seemed a big risk.

MARK COYLE: "The band were intensely funny. They were wild, but professional too. Things were unfolding in front of them. Never mind *Definitely Maybe*, they had the next album pretty much worked out, too. They were great days, full of invention and full of life, with a band ready to explode."

"THEY WERE GREAT DAYS, FULL OF INVENTION AND FULL OF LIFE, WITH A BAND READY TO EXPLODE" **MARK COYLE**

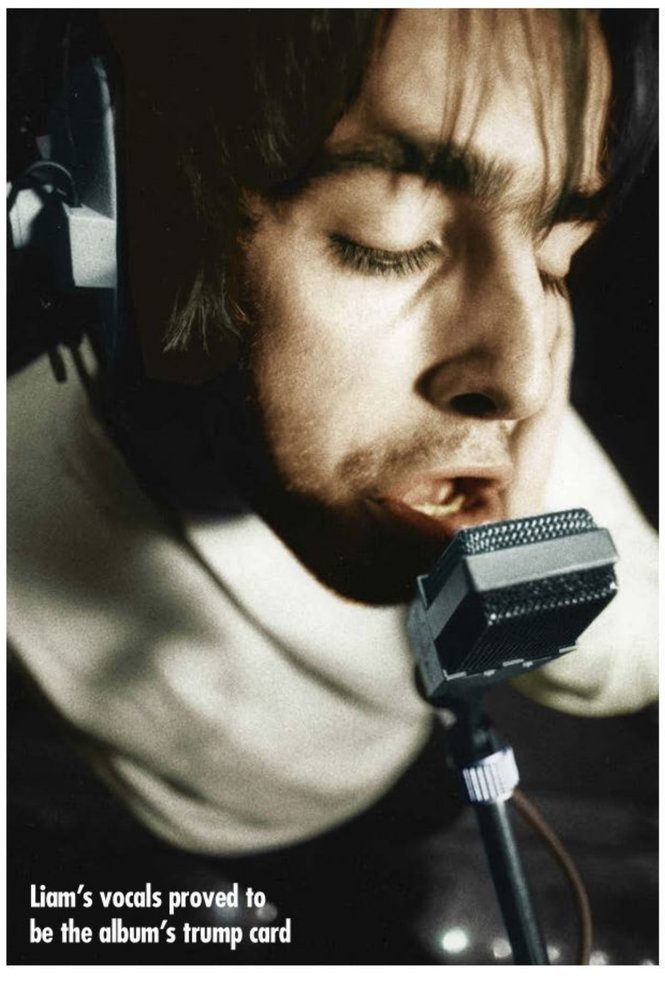
ANJALI DUTT: "I'd only met Noel and Mark, who were in their mid-20s. I hadn't realised Liam, Tony and Guigsy were teenagers. When the band turned up on the first evening, it was like the school trip had burst in. I'd worked with sophisticated bands with nice catering, but they were going, 'We can't eat this stuff! Can we have bangers and mash?'"

MARK COYLE: "The first thing I decided was to set the studio up as if it was a gig. They were close together so that they could see each other and hear everything, as if it was a rehearsal. They knew the songs very well anyway, so it was comfortable for them."

ANJALI DUTT: "Noel was excited to be in a studio. He'd be up early, and he was a one-man band who could play drums, bass and guitars. Him and Mark were different from the rest, the others wouldn't wake up for ages and were, 'What's for dinner?' They'd be on PlayStation or watching TV. The whole album would have been done much quicker with Noel playing every single part, but it wouldn't have sounded like Oasis. There was something really exciting about seeing Oasis play all at once."

ALAN MCGEE: "The rest of the band, apart from Noel and Liam, get slagged off, but they were great, especially Bonehead. He's not a lead guitarist, but he's a fucking great rhythm guitar player. They were all essential, really. Tony was a punk drummer. I don't know if he'd have worked out on *What's The Story*, but he was right for that first record."

ANJALI DUTT: "I think Tony was really good, but there was low-level bullying towards him, where they'd ask me, 'Isn't he crap?' How good was he meant to be? It's not like he'd had expensive drum lessons, and when you're not rich, being a drummer is a big deal, as a drumkit takes up so much room. But there's



Liam's vocals proved to be the album's trump card

PART OF THE MASTERPLAN

From *Take Me Away* on the flipside of *Supersonic* onwards, Oasis immediately established themselves as one of the all-time classic B-sides bands. Songs other bands would kill to have as singles, such as *Cigarettes And Alcohol*'s *Fade Away*, soon followed. It's a profligacy Alan McGee regrets.

"People say to me, 'You did a good job there' and I sold a lot of records, but I should have done better," McGee admits. "I shouldn't have given those songs away as B-sides. That was me not doing my job, as me, Noel and Liam got cocky. The quality of songs Noel was writing around *Definitely Maybe*, we thought that was going to go on forever. But, of course, it was transient and they were only human beings."

He particularly regrets how *The Masterplan* was later released, saying: "That wasn't even a B-side. It was the fourth song on the *Wonderwall* CD single, and that's madness! That B-sides compilation *The Masterplan* should have been Oasis' third album. But in some ways, the quality has gone on forever, because here we are, 25 years later, still talking about them."

SUPERSONIC

11 APRIL, 1994 CRE 176

Having smashed open the door with the swaggering rock 'n' roll drama of their first single, B-side *Take Me Away* was the first evidence of both Noel's deft ability to write a universal ballad and to take the lead, assuming the lead vocal and strumming an acoustic guitar alone. The 12-inch adds a live recording of the joyful *I Will Believe*, with the CD single including the white label version of *Columbia*. Copies of the 12-inch promo have sold for up to £100.

DISCOGS £42

LIVE FOREVER

8 AUGUST, 1994 CRE 185

One of the band's greatest songs, *Live Forever* preceded the album's release by three weeks, sneaking into the UK Top 10. The trend of Noel taking the B-side continued, with an acoustic version of *Up In The Sky*. The full-band *Cloudburst* appears on the 12-inch, with the CD including a live version of *Supersonic*. Numbered limited-edition versions of the 7-inch fetch on average £40 on Discogs, with the 12-inch promo selling for anything from £30-£100.

DISCOGS £40

SHAKERMAKER

13 JUNE, 1994 CRE 182

Unusually long for an Oasis single and namechecking Manchester record shop Sifters, *Shakermaker* lacked the incendiary power of the album's first 7-inch, *Supersonic*. Its B-side, *D'Yer Wanna Be A Spaceman?*, has an understated charm, Noel again appearing alone with his acoustic. An 8-track demo of *Alive*, sung by Liam, appears on the 12-inch, with promos commanding up to £130. A misprint of the 7-inch, with both sides labelled as the B-Side, is very rare. You'll need to buy the CD version for a scintillating live cut of *Bring It On Down*.

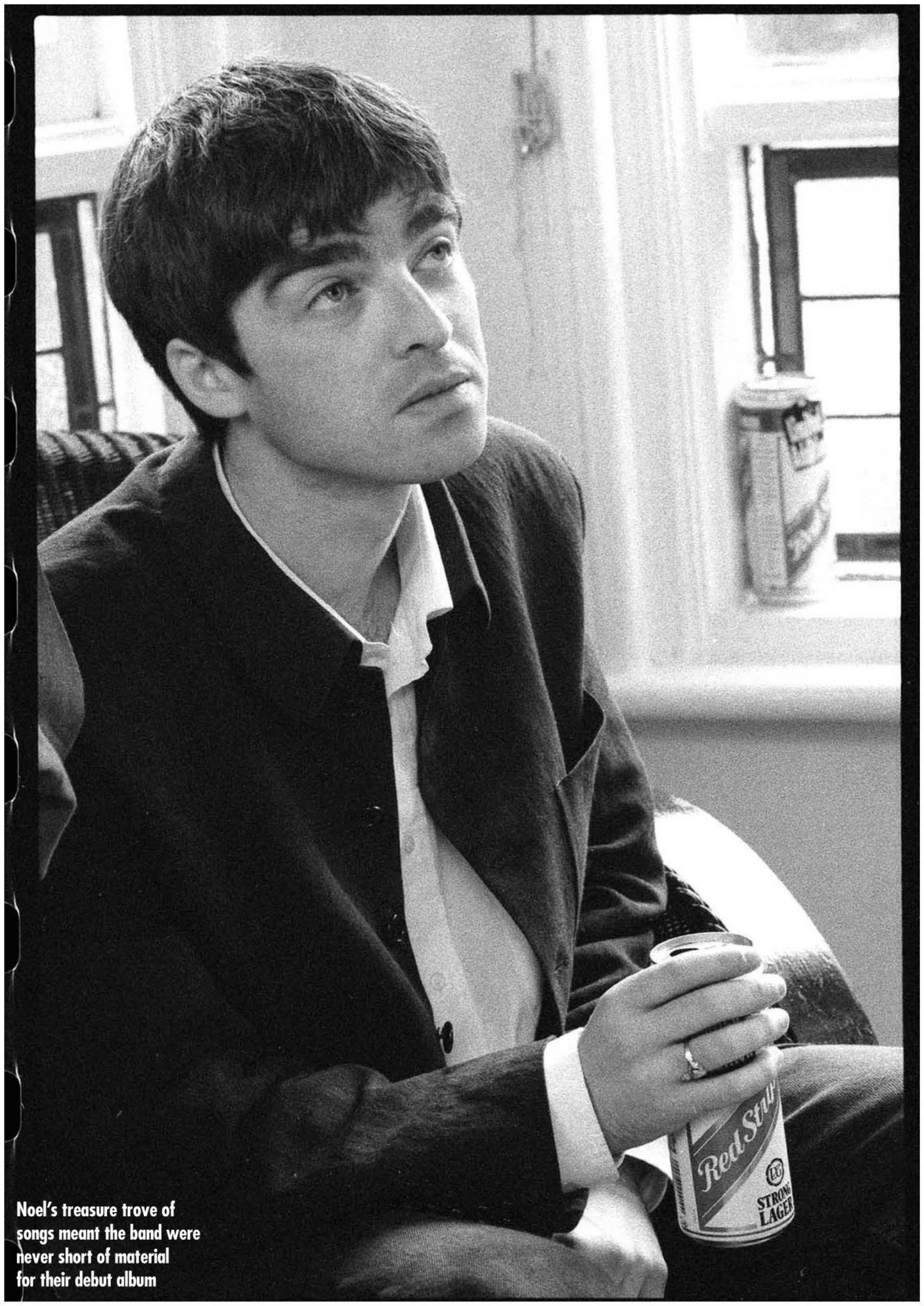
DISCOGS £32

CIGARETTES & ALCOHOL

10 OCT, 1994 CRE 190

The band's second Top 10 hit boasted the most stellar collection of B-sides of any of the album's singles. An eight-minute assault on The Beatles' *I Am The Walrus* appeared on the 7-inch, credited as being recorded at Glasgow Cathouse, but it was later explained that "Contrary to previous credits, *I Am The Walrus* was recorded at a conference of Sony executives, gathered to hear Creation's new signings." *Listen Up* and *Fade Away*, on the CD version, were both included in *The Masterplan*'s tracklisting. A 12-inch promo limited to 300 copies commands as much as £200.

DISCOGS £30



Noel's treasure trove of songs meant the band were never short of material for their debut album

a tendency to bully the people you went to school with. I'm a maths teacher now, and I know the tyranny of the school never goes away."

MARK COYLE: "The whole band were jointly on the case on that album. Nobody else apart from Tony could have drummed *Definitely Maybe*. He fit like a glove on those sessions and at the gigs. Same with Guigsy. Technically not a great musician, but spiritually he fitted and he was tight. Guigsy couldn't play a lead line, but he was perfect for Noel to add layers of guitars on top. The whole band were beautifully matched, all the stars aligned."

PUSH & PULL

Once the band had properly settled in and were comfortable at Sawmills, the sessions began to progress quickly – well, at least for most of the band…

"THE KID BROTHER JUST WANTED TO BASH IT ALL DOWN SO HE COULD GET ON WITH BEING A ROCK STAR" **ANJALI DUTT**

ANJALI DUTT: "The minute you assembled the band, there'd be one missing. When they were finally in the same room, it was, 'My God! They're there. Go! Go!' You'd have a flurry of activity for an hour and then off they'd go, back on the PlayStation. The only thing you could do to annoy Liam was make it go on for too long, do something fussy. Recording him was so straightforward. I don't even think Liam knows what being out-of-tune is. His voice is clear, it's strong, he doesn't pop the microphone pop shield, he doesn't sing with sibilant Ss. Liam just sings perfectly."

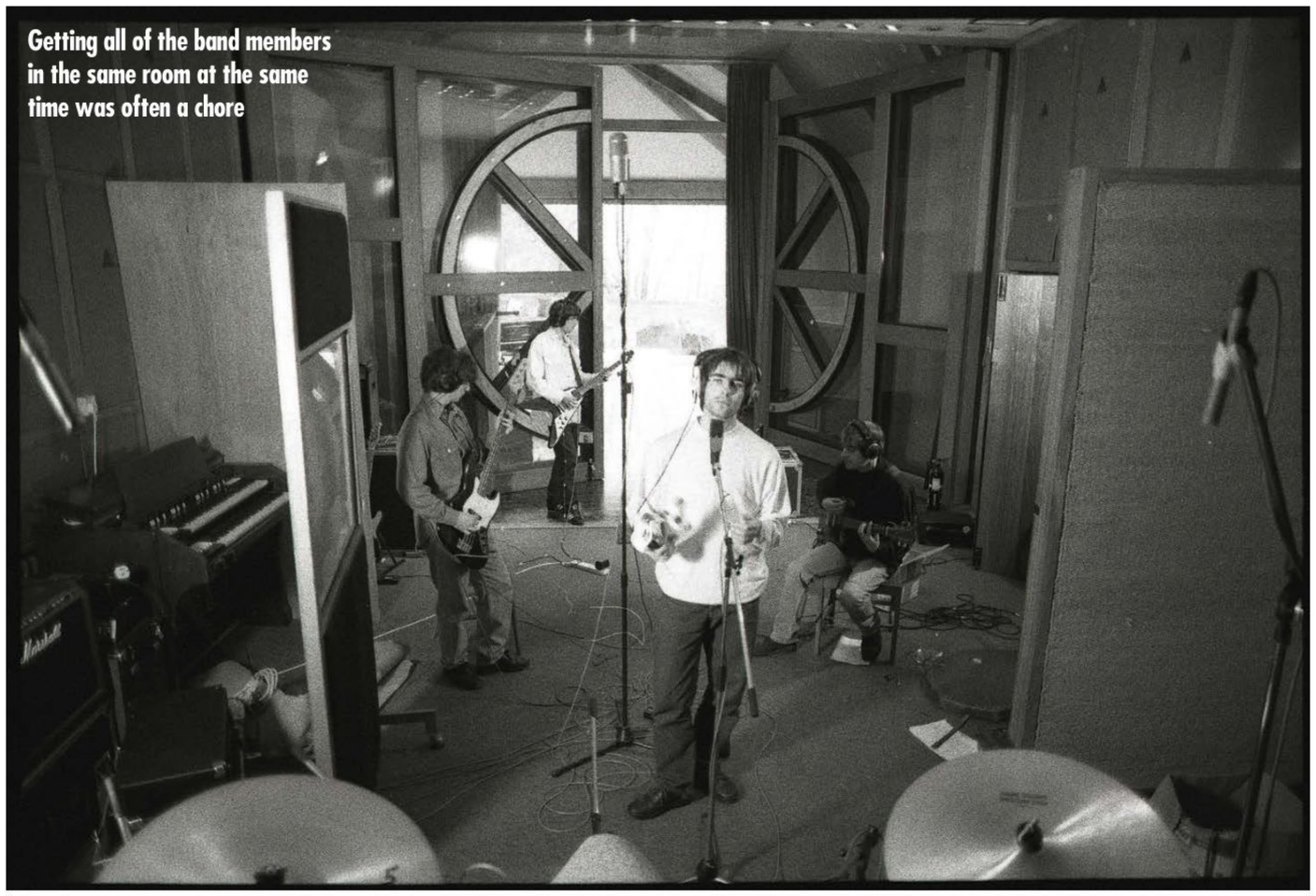
MARK COYLE: "Liam was so, so good. A couple of tracks just weren't touched, which gives *Definitely Maybe* a certain purity. *Married With Children* was just me and Noel in my studio at home. Noel came round, had a cup of tea, we set up the studio really quickly and Liam was only in the house for about six minutes. Came in, sang, fucked off, done. One take and it was beautiful."

ANJALI DUTT: "Oasis were a great mixture of Noel wanting them to sound like his entire record collection and his kid brother's band just about being able to play garage rock. Noel saying, 'I want it to sound like Neil Young' wasn't going to happen, as his kid brother's band were not Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. They were pulling in two different directions. Mark and Noel are serious music anoraks. They'd listen to tons of music on headphones, with Noel adding layers and layers and layers of guitars. And the kid brother just wanted to bash it all down so he could get on with being a rock star. It must have been strange for Noel. He could get to be massive, but to do it he had to deal with his kid brother's mates. Unfortunately for him, this was the way to make it big."

MARK COYLE: "The hardest song to do was *Bring It On Down*, because Tony couldn't get his rhythm together. He'd been playing it live for years, but the more he tried, the worse it got. In a way, it was entertaining seeing him crumble. We left Sawmills lacking the drum track. Once we started mixing in London, we got another drummer in, right in front of Tony. I can't remember who…"

ANJALI DUTT: "I thought the other drummer was someone to do with Paul Weller, one of the White brothers, either Alan, who joined Oasis after Tony, or Steve, who played with Weller."

STEVE WHITE: "I can categorically say it wasn't me, and it's highly unlikely it was Alan. To the best of my memory, the first time our paths crossed properly was when Paul and Noel did *Talk Tonight* on *The White Room* on Channel 4. At that point, *Definitely Maybe* was already out and Alan was playing with Dr Robert. Tony is a great guy who's become a good friend. I was glad to let him know later that Alan was never lined



Getting all of the band members in the same room at the same time was often a chore

up to replace Tony before Noel got rid of him. That just didn't happen." (As far as *Long Live Vinyl* can ascertain, the drummer was most likely Tony Elson of Oasis' early champions The Real People).

MARK COYLE: "Whoever it was, the other drummer was even worse. Tony had his own style, and trying to sit someone else in to do what he did? No chance. We sacked the other guy off and said to Tony, 'Right, this is your chance'. And he nailed it, first take."

OFF TO THE CHIP SHOP

The Sawmills sessions were completed in under a fortnight. Mixing began at Eden Studios in Chiswick.

ANJALI DUTT: "Sawmills was great for Oasis, because it had no connotations to urban life and it was so complicated to interrupt them. It was really hard to get anything done at Eden. Oasis were party people and all these very nice but very heavy people turned up from Liverpool and Manchester like a rap posse. Liam also had a bad habit of wandering off to the chip shop, making friends and inviting them back to the studio."

ALAN MCGEE: "When Mark and Anjali were mixing the album, it sounded too indie and very thin. It was wrong. With someone as good as Anjali involved and it wasn't working? That's when I started to worry. I thought, 'What are we going to do?' But I had my own drama going on, as I was in rehab. So I wasn't totally consumed with Oasis trying to get their fucking record done."

FALLING MASONRY

Oasis manager Marcus Russell had the solution. He recommended Owen Morris, an engineer who had recently worked with Johnny Marr on Electronic.

ALAN MCGEE: "I was against Owen, saying to Marcus, 'Electronic are a pop band!' Marcus kept on me, saying I should give Owen a mix on spec. So we gave him *Rock & Roll Star* as a trial and it was clear Owen was a genius. As soon as I heard what Owen did, I said, 'Right, he's doing the album'. You only had to listen to Owen's mix once to know he'd nailed it."

MARK COYLE: "Before Owen, the songs weren't quite leaping out of the speakers. He brought the album to life."

ANJALI DUTT: "I prefer the Sawmills mixes, because Owen's aren't sonically varied and it's noticeably louder than anything else. It feels like you've been hit by a load of masonry. I really can't listen to the whole album from beginning to end. But I appreciate the way it sounds is what made it successful. It's just not my personal taste, but Owen got a lot of attitude in and the way he made it sound is what made the album a hit. The songs are anthemic and emotional. You can feel your heart rise and feel a moment when just about any of those songs start up."

GIVE ME GIN & TONIC

With *Definitely Maybe* finished at the third attempt, it was released on 29 August, 1994. It was the fastest-selling debut album of all-time in Britain, shifting 86,000 copies in its first week. *Supersonic* was a classic debut single. *Shakermaker*, *Live Forever* and *Cigarettes And Alcohol* weren't bad either.

ALAN MCGEE: "The singles mostly picked themselves, but I'd wanted *Bring It On Down* as the first single. Me and Noel were in the studio and I was still doing drugs at the time. Noel cut me a big, big line of coke and, when I took it, he put on *Supersonic*. Noel said: 'That should be the single', I said 'YES!' and that's how *Supersonic* came out as the first single."

ANJALI DUTT: "I was excited that an album I'd worked on didn't have that very male indie audience. You'd go anywhere and *Definitely Maybe* would be on: clubs, stadiums, middle-class, lower-class, any colour, anywhere in England."

MARK COYLE: "*Definitely Maybe* never leaves you. It's such a massive record, and quite obviously it's stood the test of time."

ALAN MCGEE: "*What's The Story…* has got some amazing songs on, but it's not a complete record like *Definitely Maybe*. Does it feel like 25 years? In May, I was with Debbie Turner, my friend who brought Oasis to play at King Tut's, at the Malmaison Hotel in Manchester. The guy on the decks started playing *Don't Look Back In Anger*, so we had to scarper. That was a weird moment. I thought, 'If it wasn't for Debbie bringing them to Glasgow and me signing them, no fucker would have heard that song'. And here we were, running away." ●

MAYBE NOT

Despite working on a classic like *Definitely Maybe*, neither co-producer Mark Coyle or engineer Anjali Dutt are widely involved in the music industry now.

Dutt took teacher-training just two years later and works as a maths teacher. Her former pupils include Paul Weller and Trevor Horn's children. "I thought at first I'd be a freelance engineer, waiting for the phone to ring," she explains. "But the phone doesn't ring if you don't rustle things up. Now, even if Coldplay rang, I'd have to say no as I'd have to get to school."

Coyle simply hasn't heard a band worth bothering with. He also worked with The Stone Roses and Shack, overseeing the 2015 reissue of Shack singer Michael Head's cult classic *The Magical World Of The Strands*. "I don't hear anything I'd like to be involved in," says Coyle. "I struggle to hold an interest. After Michael Head and Noel Gallagher, where do you go? You're just settling, working for record companies and taking jobs on. I was never a jobbing producer. From the early days, I'd only work for people I liked."

COVER STAR

MICHAEL SPENCER JONES

The covers of Oasis' first three albums became as iconic and memorable as the songs Noel Gallagher crafted. **Teri Saccone** meets the man who created them, photographer Michael Spencer Jones

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY © MICHAEL SPENCER JONES

Michael Spencer Jones is a visual risk taker who pushes boundaries with record sleeve art and portraits. Famed for his work with Oasis and The Verve, Jones' disruptive approach is visceral, often mischievous and consummately authentic. His images fluently mirror the music they represent.

Jones shot the memorable cover for Oasis' 1994 debut *Definitely Maybe*. He later submerged a Rolls-Royce in a swimming pool for 1997's *Be Here Now*, the fastest-selling album in British history, shifting one million copies in its first two weeks. Later this year, his Masterplan25 exhibit of Oasis images will open across the UK.

A finely nuanced artist, Jones' infatuation with photography began at the age of 12 via an anniversary issue of *Life* magazine his dad bought which, he explains: "Contained every aspect of photography in its pages: reportage, fashion, still life, infra-red techniques and much more, I was instantly fascinated. That you can capture one second in time forever amazed me. At school, I was very science-

▲ OASIS
BE HERE NOW (1997)

"Originally, the Rolls was gonna be sticking out of the pool. It was also going to be shot at night. It was an album done on cocaine, and that's reflected in the sleeve. We had a big budget, so I was under more pressure. Having a big budget can be a bit of a trap you can fall into. Throwing loads of money at shoots doesn't make them any easier."

THE VERVE
A STORM IN HEAVEN
(1993)

"When it came to setting a car on fire, I was up for it. Taking a photograph of a burning car was a challenge and that shoot was done without much thought for health and safety. We worked without a harness in terms of health and safety so, yes, it was a dangerous shoot. I had a mini-argument with the band's manager as to whether it should be doused in petrol or diesel. I felt diesel was better, as it's more viscous. The band voted for petrol. But as we discovered, with petrol it forms an invisible and explosive cloud, and as the manager went to light the fuse, he got within 15 feet of the car and nearly got himself blown up. So we nearly lost the band's manager that day. What works is the juxtaposition of a burning car set against a peaceful, bucolic scene, and the fact that the subjects are completely uninterested or unaware that there is a burning car in their garden. There is a global analogy to that photograph. Sort of like Supertramp's cover *Crisis? What Crisis?*"

orientated. But at the age of 16, I suddenly became interested in the arts. Photography was perfect because it's where art meets science."

Seduced by the creativity of fashion spreads in *Blitz* and *The Face*, Jones initially set his sights on fashion photography as a career – until fate stepped in.

"On my last year at Bournemouth College, I was offered a job at a catalogue house in Manchester. I was poor back then and didn't want to move to London. So I walked straight into this photography job, shooting towels for a catalogue company. This was a real shock to the system compared to the creative college environment I'd left behind.

"I didn't have much connection to the job, except I was using a camera all day. It was 80 hours a week and it'd be dark in the morning when I left and dark when I went home at night. It was like working down the pits for two years, but I liked the discipline of the job, it helped me with my still life, composing shots. Then they sacked me after two years, on my birthday.

"The day I left, it felt like being released from incarceration. It suddenly re-opened my life to everything that was going on that I'd missed out on. I then freelanced for a theatrical magazine. I started there working with actors like Richard Harris, built up my portfolio, developed my portraiture."

Jones maintains that his experience of higher education informs his work. "I actually worked really hard at college, and what I learnt there carried through professionally from experimenting with film varieties, lighting techniques and film processing. When I eventually started doing album covers, all that came in handy."

Jones' emergence as a freelancer dovetailed with the ascent of the Manchester music scene of the early 90s. "By default, I ended up in Manchester rather than London. Perfect timing for a man with a camera. My first proper music commission was photographing The Stone Roses at Spike Island. I worked for Happy Mondays and Factory Records, too. Manchester was buzzing. The first cover I did was for the Ruthless Rap Assassins' single called *Just Mellow*. That project led on to The Verve, and the association caught the eye of Noel Gallagher.

"Oasis were great people to work with. I've got very fond memories of them. Plus they're very open to work with, not rigid about ideas. It was an organic process, always very fluid."

Although he conjured many of his sleeve ideas, Jones openly credits the bands for their input. "The burning car idea for The Verve's back sleeve on *This Is Music* was Richard Ashcroft's idea. He posited that if you see a burning car on a street in a city, it's an indication of a breakdown in society. So I thought about how tricky it would be to burn a car in the street in a city, as you'd have to seal the street off and get permits.

"I came up with putting the burning car against a bucolic scene instead. The car burning against the tranquillity of country life. The juxtaposing of that is interesting. Photography is a visual language wherein you create new meanings with an image, just like when you put two words together and come up with a new phrase. Anyway, that's one of my favourite shots because of the irony. That image perfectly melds one idea to another.

"Photography is very similar to being a chef, and getting the right ingredients in the right

"OASIS WERE GREAT PEOPLE TO WORK WITH. IT WAS AN ORGANIC PROCESS. ALWAYS VERY FLUID"

◀ OASIS
DEFINITELY MAYBE (1994)

"An important element of a good album cover shot is balance, and the first Oasis cover has that. You've got a perfect triangle between Liam on the floor in a state, Noel on the settee and the globe in the top right. Your eye kind of ricochets around that shot. If you look into how the human brain interprets images, one of the most important things we're drawn to is balance. If any other photographer took that photo using those elements it would not appear the same. All those elements came together at once. Initially, the band had wanted the inflatable globe placed in the corner of the room: but it didn't seem right in a lounge, so I thought of hanging it from the ceiling with some invisible thread. Because I used a three-second exposure I thought, 'Fantastic, I can spin the globe just before I take a shot and it's going to appear blurred as if it's actually spinning in the room as if by magic'. That and Liam lying on the floor was the catalyst to the whole shot."

amount in a recipe is crucial. It's a bit of a naff analogy, but it works with photos. Just a small change like the sun coming out from behind the clouds alters the entire dynamic. I don't think people realise the subtleties involved in a great photo versus a mediocre one. There's an equilibrium to it all."

In contrast to *This Is Music*, Jones' first Oasis cover 25 years ago, *Definitely Maybe*, came about spontaneously.

"They wanted to be sat around a table in a house, which was at Bonehead's place, so I went round there to take a look. I'd done a reccy originally to the flat we used. There's a dining room in the back that you can't see. The band had originally wanted to be shot in that room, around a table with a square rectangular window in the background. But I began thinking, 'What are they meant to be doing around a table? Playing cards? Eating dinner?' It would have felt staged. Plus that rectangular window was impossible to avoid unless we drew the curtains.

"I wasn't keen on shooting it in that location but saw the other room, the lounge, and realised it would only work in there, so instead of using the bay window as the illumination source I decided to use it as a feature.

"Instead of having the light in the background in the lounge, we shot it with them looking into the bay window. There were, however, all these expansive floorboards, too, which worked nicely but became a problem, that was solved with having Liam lying down."

Capturing all the objects in that room in that shot, shooting into the light was challenging. "I used a wide angle lens. Shooting into direct light, you're dealing with silhouettes and the light from a bay window is very strong. So the light on your subjects has to be greater than the light coming into the window. It was a small room and it would just look like a band in a room without attention to the details. At the time, I was experimenting with a lot of cross-processing, too."

"I've never been scared of experimenting," Jones explains. "It's not open heart surgery. No one's gonna die if an idea doesn't work out. But the more you experiment, you become more familiar working outside of your comfort zone, trying something new with each shoot."

His risk-taking is fuelled by a fondness for fun and a lack of fear. "That fear of doing something that may backfire? I've never had that problem. I think bands like working with me because I approach it as a day or afternoon out, it's going to be fun. Maybe we'll climb

▲ THE VERVE
SHE'S A SUPERSTAR (12") (1992)

"The original idea for *She's A Superstar* was taken from a late night arts programme called *Arena*, formerly on the BBC. The opening titles had a neon sign with the title of the show floating on a lake. So for The Verve, I suggested putting a neon sign in a waterfall, which I thought was more visually interesting than a lake. The waterfall was on the Snake Pass in Derbyshire. I brought in the generator to power the neon sign, there is absolutely no Photoshop involved, everything was done 'in camera'."

▶ OASIS
(WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING GLORY? (1995)

"We had a low budget and I'd done a reccy on Berwick Street in London a couple of days before. I saw a VW van parked there and it very much reminded me of Bob Dylan's *The Freewheelin'* cover. The night before the shoot, we stayed up all night and got to the location at 5am to get it done in the best early light, so it was dawn and you can see the streetlights are on. It's a simple image – you do learn to get by without big budgets. I learnt early on that photography is a problem-solving situation. What do I do or use to make something work? I thrive on solving problems."

over a wall somewhere to an area you shouldn't go. If you can't have a good time, there's no point. We're only taking pictures, so who cares? Let's just do it!

"I read or heard an interview with David Bowie, who said, 'everyone is so scared of doing something new'. He compared it to going out in the sea and remarked that you should go out in the sea to where you can't feel your feet on the bottom – and that's where you should go artistically."

Jones is both confident and tenacious about obtaining what's required to make photos mesmerising. "I've got this 'target' when I approach a shoot: to get the right shot. I've got to hit the target. Very fortunately, I always manage to get it but don't give up until I do. It's the 'sweet spot' in the shoot when it all comes together. It can happen early on, rather unexpectedly, or later on in a shoot, but it always happens.

"You can take 800 shots, but none may be working. I'm very aware it's all about getting one right shot. It's down to setting a mood, making the atmosphere right, playing the appropriate music, getting your subjects to relax. With portraits, there's a halfway house where you both have to meet: the space where you join your subject with energy from both sides resulting in a great portrait."

Jones understands the nature of photography, and articulates his insight. "It's a powerful medium because it's so fraudulent, obviously the reason why it's used in advertising. You can beautify things, or make things appear that are not real. If truth is reality, we are increasingly having problems dealing with that. We know there are tonnes of plastic in the oceans, but we don't want to really see the full extent of that plastic."

Despite commercial success on a grand scale, Jones retains artistic integrity and control. "If someone suggests an idea that I don't like, then nothing on earth will make it happen. If I don't believe in an idea, I just won't do it." ●

You can find more of Michael Spencer Jones' work at www.spellboundgalleries.com

◀ OASIS
D'YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? (SINGLE) (1997)

"This was the most difficult cover shot, but it also turned out to be one of my best. It was difficult because I was in a confined alleyway in Wigan with all these people on the shoot. Everyone's looking to you as though you're some kind of magician being the photographer. But there's no script like there is when you're filming with a storyboard. You've got to think on your feet. I looked into the camera at the crowd of people and thought the scene looked like a bag of horseshit, to be honest. I needed to make something happen. There seemed to be no energy and it was their big comeback single as well. I felt some desperation and pleaded with the band to give me out some energy. Then I saw a woman holding a baby and a schoolgirl in a blazer, so I told them where to stand in the crowd, so this gave depth to the shot. Liam, who's great to photograph, looked into the camera, brought the energy that was needed and just at that point the sun came out and the magic happened."

ON SALE NOW!

Classic Album

Talking Heads

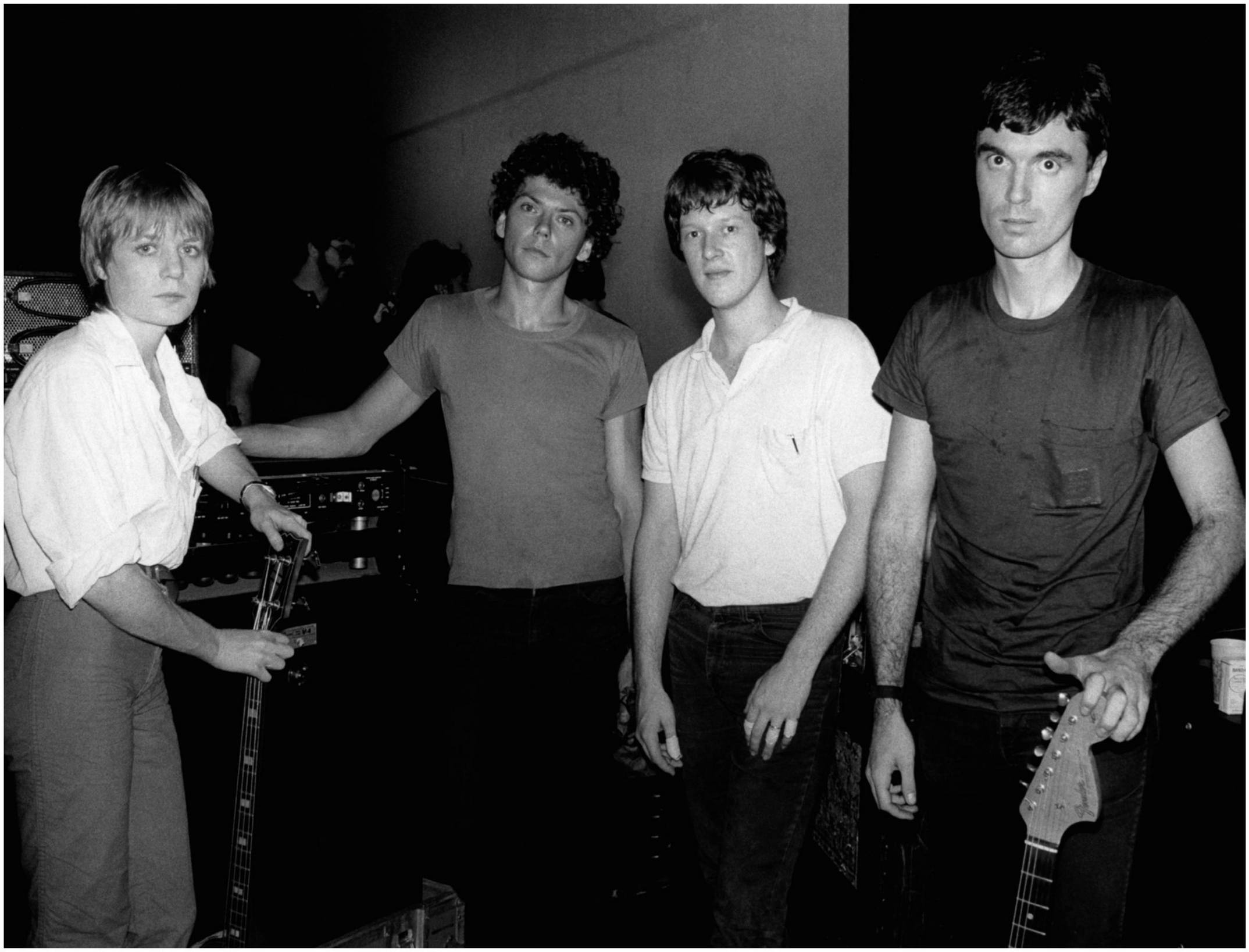
FEAR OF MUSIC

On their third album, Talking Heads abandoned their minimalist art-punk sound for something much looser, darker and more intense. "The music had this disturbing hue to it," remarked frontman David Byrne. Forty years on, **Neil Crossley** assesses the merits of this enduring masterpiece

TALKING HEADS

FEAR OF MUSIC

CLASSIC ALBUM 65 FEAR OF MUSIC



The band's New York cool prohibited smiling: (L-R) Tina Weymouth, Jerry Harrison, Chris Frantz and David Byrne

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

On the evening of 19 May 1977, the four members of the Ramones – one of the most hotly anticipated bands of the moment – were crammed into the dressing room at Eric's, the venue on Liverpool's Mathew Street right opposite the site of the legendary Cavern Club. Squatting on the floor in one corner of the dressing room, amid the assembled clothes, bags and touring ephemera, and quietly leafing through a magazine, was a rangy and intense 25-year-old called David Byrne, whose band Talking Heads were the support act that evening.

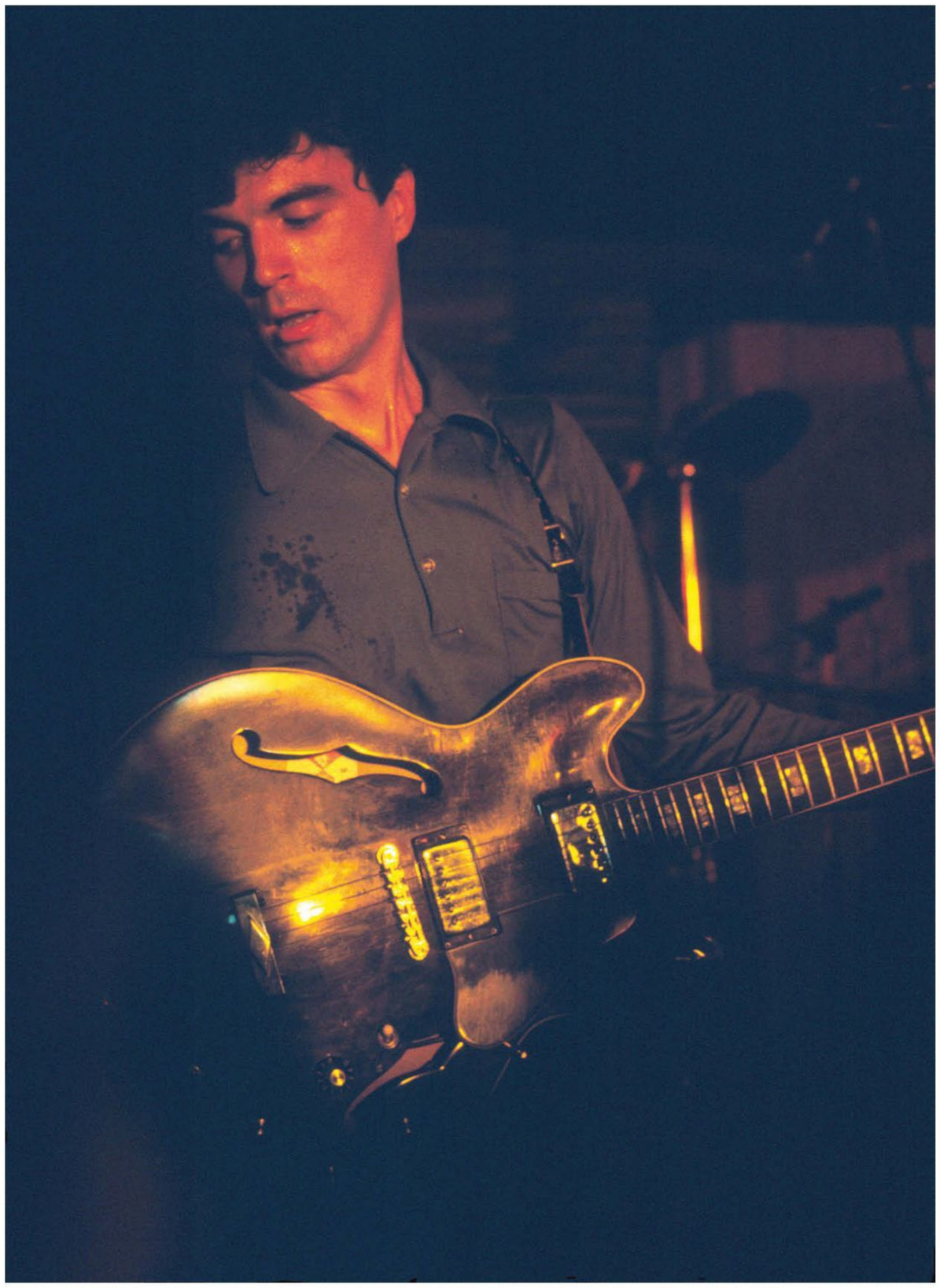
As contrasting line-ups go, the bill that night took some beating: the raw cathartic minimalism of the Ramones, preceded by the preppy, clean-cut crispness of Talking Heads. At first glance, the only thing the two bands shared was the same label, Sire Records. But when Byrne and his band took to the stage that night, they displayed a fierce, unsettling intensity that was every bit as stark and confrontational as the headliners, and one which chimed effortlessly in those combative times.

Talking Heads were quirky and unique, blending punk, funk and disco into an enthralling hybrid all of its own. Their first two albums were revelatory, eclectic and unique. But it was their third album, *Fear Of Music,* in 1979, that really set the band apart. On this release, Byrne looked inward to examine his own private, paranoid universe. The result is an album that, 40 years on, still resonates strongly.

ART SCHOOL ETHOS

Like countless bands across the decades, it was the liberal environs of art school, in this case Rhode Island School Of Design, that served as the breeding ground for the band that would become Talking Heads. It was there in the winter of 1974 that Byrne, born in Dumbarton, Scotland but raised in Maryland, USA, met Kentucky-born Chris Frantz, a fellow student and drummer. The pair formed a band called The Artistic. Within weeks, at Frantz's request, they had recruited fellow RISD student and California native Tina Weymouth, an early admirer of the band. The bulk of their set was 60s covers with the occasional David Byrne composition included. One such composition would go on to become a classic.

"Tina and I were sharing a painting studio," recalled Chris Frantz in *The Independent* in March 2013, "when one day David came in to say he had a song he needed help finishing. It was about a psychopath, and he wanted the bridge to be written in French. He knew Tina was fluent, as her mother was French, so Tina wrote the bridge for the song and I wrote a couple of verses for what was to become *Psycho Killer,* and I realised the three of us worked well together."



David Byrne was born in Scotland, but brought up in Maryland, USA

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

As first compositions go, *Psycho Killer* was an astonishing achievement. With its punchy, infectious bassline intro and memorable "Qu'est-ce que c'est" chorus line – based on a reworking of Otis Redding's *Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)* – it would go on to become the band's signature debut hit when eventually released in December 1977. For the nascent band back in 1974, it was a colossal asset to the setlist.

LOFT LIVING

Frantz and Weymouth soon became a couple, and after graduating, moved with Byrne to a loft in New York's Lower East Side, with the aim of developing the band. From the outset, they had a firm manifesto: to relentlessly dismantle the clichés of rock 'n' roll and write their own rules. "No rock moves or poses, no pomp or drama, no rock hair, no rock lights, no rehearsed stage patter," Byrne recalled in his 2012 book *How Music Works*.

> "No rock moves or poses, no drama, no rock hair, no rock lights"
> **DAVID BYRNE**

They rehearsed intensely and began looking at new options for their name. Suggestions such as the Portable Crushers and the Vague Dots were rejected when someone unearthed the phrase 'talking heads'.

The songs

CORE PERSONNEL

David Byrne Lead vocals, guitar
Jerry Harrison Guitar, backing vocals, keyboards
Tina Weymouth Bass guitar, backing vocals
Chris Frantz Drums

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

Brian Eno Electronic treatments, backing vocals
The Sweetbreaths Backing vocals (Track 7)
Julia Last Backing vocals (Track 1)
Robert Fripp Guitar (Track 1)
Ari Congas (Tracks 1 and 5)
Gene Wilder Congas (Tracks 1 and 5)
Hassam Ramzy Surdo (Track 1)
Abdou M'Boup Djembe, talking drum (Track 1)
Assane Thiam Percussion (Track 1)

MAIN PRODUCTION CREDITS

Brian Eno and Talking Heads

RECORDED

April to May 1979
Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth's loft, Long Island City.
The Hit Factory, Atlantic Studios, RPM Sound Studios,
The Record Plant, New York City

RELEASED

3 August 1979
Sire Records

1 I Zimbra

African cadences pervade this opening track, which is built around a series of nonsense syllables by Dadaist poet Hugo Ball, chanted by Byrne over a single-chord vamp, as the guitars, bass, drums and percussion ricochet back and forward. The track was the brainchild of producer Brian Eno, and synths augment the African rhythmic elements. Robert Fripp played guitar, and it became a popular live track on the band's 1980 tour. Jerry Harrison nominated *I Zimbra* as his favourite Talking Heads song, and pointed out that the the group's next album *Remain In Light* was indebted to it. "We also knew that our next album would be a further exploration of what we had begun with *I Zimbra*," he told *Liquid Audio* in 1997.

2 Mind

This track showcases Byrne's first use of double-tracked vocals, which gives his voice real weight, particularly when the two melodies are staggered an octave apart. It's an inspired decision that renders the vocal line twice as plaintive, although as critic Jon Pareles pointed out in his 1979 review of *Fear Of Music* for *Rolling Stone*: "All the while a giddy synth line is busy cutting away any trace of sentiment."

The clipped, spacious funk groove is enhanced by spikey guitar chords, sequenced synth motifs and some high-end bass swoops from Tina Weymouth. Like most of the tracks on the album, *Mind* is in a minor key, which gives it a foreboding atmosphere.

The songs
CONTINUED

3 Paper
A rich, ringing guitar riff on the intro gives way to a sparse rhythm, anchored as always by Chris Frantz's metronomic drumming and Tina Weymouth's bass. At 0:34, the song picks up pace, with the introduction of a circular funk motif on guitar, as Weymouth drops down an octave to a deep, resonant sound. "Take a little risk," suggests Byrne, his wavering delivery adding to the unsettling sense of urgency. This is a band with a clear sense of themselves and the direction they are forging. It's also a reminder that, 40 years on from its release, the album still sounds fresh and relevant.

4 Cities
Surreal humour and deadpan delivery abound in this fast-paced bass- and keyboard-led song. "Did I forget to mention, forget to mention Memphis, home of Elvis and the Ancient Greeks?" quips Byrne. Funk, R&B and other dance influences are at play here and the track has an infectious, incessant groove. Released as a single in 1980, *Cities* anticipated the rhythmic, densely textured sound that would distinguish the band's next album, the landmark release *Remain In Light*.

Essentially, the track charts a man's search for a city to live in. It's a travelogue, a theme enhanced by the fact that the track fades in and fades out. Byrne's uniquely off-kilter lyrics would go on to influence bands such as the Pixies.

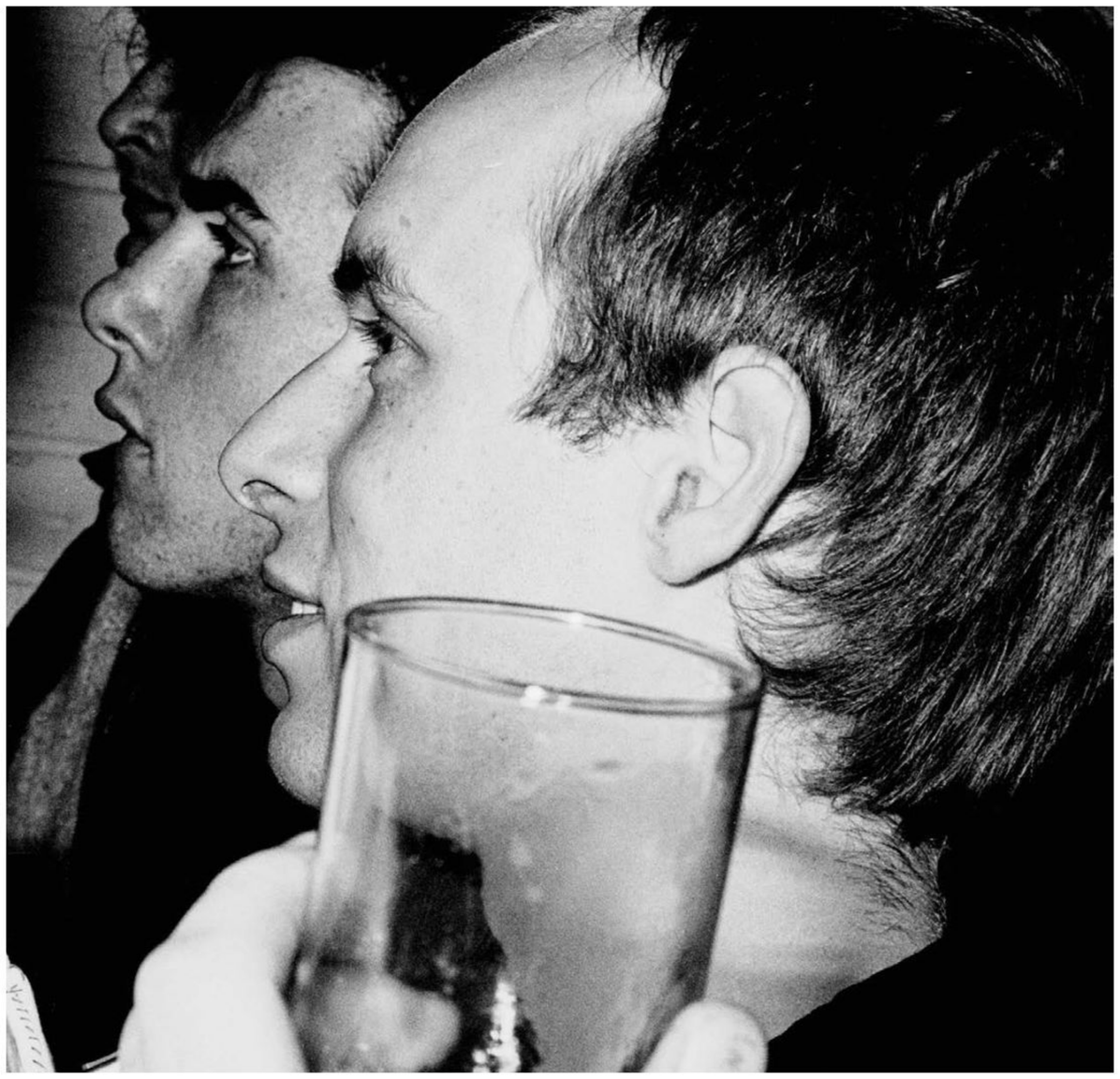
5 Life During Wartime
Described by *The New Yorker* as "apocalyptic swamp funk", *Life During Wartime* is arguably the pinnacle of this album, with a funk-punk groove that some have claimed was a strong influence on Prince's hit, *1999*, three years later. It's a strident, upbeat and effusive track, propelled along by Frantz's propulsive 4/4 beat and Weymouth's impeccably locked-in bassline.

"I thought I'd write a song about urban guerillas from the point of view of their daily lives instead of from the point of view of their politics," recalled Byrne.

6 Memories Can't Wait
In 2011, novelist Jonathan Lethem published a book called *Fear Of Music* about the transformative impact of Talking Heads' third album on him as a 15-year-old. This track, which closes Side A, was the one that had the most profound influence on him. *Memories Can Wait* is the track that puts the 'fear' into *Fear Of Music*, argued Lethem. "It's the most aggressive song on the record, in terms of real deep aggression," he said, "and it's also the most depressed song on the album."

Despite the sequenced pulsing synth throughout, there's an unbridled rock and roll swagger to the track, with its impactful and anthemic chorus. "There's a party in my mind," intones Byrne, over the A/A#/B chord sequence. "And I hope it never stops/ There's a party up there all the time/ They'll party till they drop".

Twisted, effects-drenched guitars heighten the sense of menace.



Producer Eno's individual style meshed well with the group's artistic sensibilities

"A friend had found the name in the TV guide," recalled Tina Weymouth, "which explained the term used by TV studios to describe a head-and-shoulders shot of a person talking as 'all content, no action'. It fitted."

SIGN OF THE TIMES
In retrospect, Talking Heads could not have emerged at a more opportune time or place. New York may have been on the verge of bankruptcy, but culturally it was experiencing a seismic shift. Hip-hop was emerging in the south Bronx, disco was all pervading at the now legendary Studio 54 club, while across town at such salubrious venues as CBGBs and Max's Kansas City the cream of pre-punk artists such as the Ramones, Patti Smith, Suicide, Television, Richard Hell And The Voidoids and Blondie were shaking up the music industry establishment. Talking Heads fitted seamlessly into this scene and CBGBs was the venue chosen aptly for their debut gig in June 1975.

In October of that year, Seymour Stein of Sire Records was sufficiently impressed to offer them a deal, which they initially declined, choosing instead to record their first demos for the Beserkley label. But a year later, they finally signed with Sire, releasing their first single *Love Goes To Building On Fire* in December 1976.

By now, their ranks had been swelled to a four-piece after the addition of Milwaukee-born Jerry Harrison, a former member of The Modern Lovers, on keyboards and guitar. Harrison played sporadically with the band while finishing his architecture degree at Harvard, then joined them full-time in 1977.

"We had formulated certain principles about what we wanted Talking Heads to be," he told *The Music Technology Magazine* in December 1986. "In the beginning, those principles were based on what we could do… honesty in music and commitment to what you were saying, rather than playing technique."

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

MINIMALIST SOUND

In April 1977, Talking Heads set off on their first European tour, supporting the Ramones. Sonically, they were like no one else around. Theirs was an edgy, minimal sound, integrating elements of punk, art rock and funk, all imbued with avant garde sensibilities and a quirky clean cut image. In Frantz and Weymouth, they had a strong rhythm section. Weymouth's minimal funk-inflected basslines would become a real staple of Talking Heads' sound, combining low notes with high flourishes. What's more, it was surprisingly danceable.

Against these rhythms, Byrne wove intelligent lyrics, deconstructing themes such as suburban middle America and religious fundamentalism. His geeky, intellectual lyrics were imbued with a jerky, unsettling delivery. As Stephen Thomas Erlewine of *All Music* put it: "At the start of their career, Talking Heads were all nervous energy, detached emotion and subdued minimalism".

In September 1977, they released their debut album, *Talking Heads: 77*, recorded at New York's Sundragon Studios and produced by Tony Bongiovi. It was a critical triumph, highlighting the band's unique sonic manifesto, blending obtuse, idiosyncratic elements with sharp pop sensibilities. It also produced a stunning recording of *Psycho Killer*, the band's first chart single.

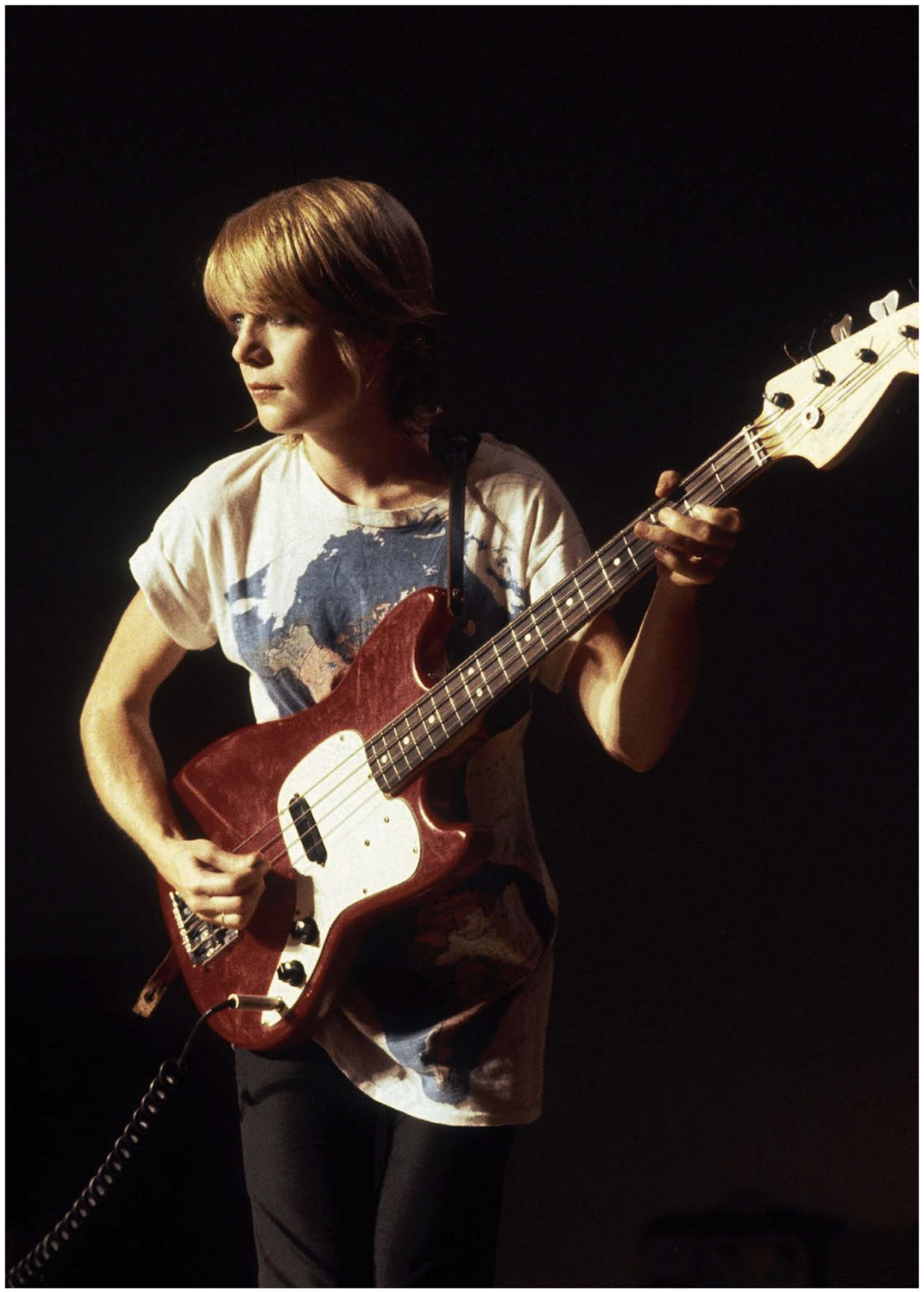
Despite the clear and potent strengths of the debut album, it would take producer Brian Eno to really give Talking Heads total focus. Eno had first met the band at the Rock Garden, London on their 1977 tour and was quickly invited to produce their second album *More Songs About Buildings And Food*. His influence was profound. Recorded in the Bahamas, the album was far more calculated and defiant, retaining the characteristic elements of the band while introducing African funk and spacey disco into their sound. The recording sparked a four-year relationship with Eno that would really bear fruit on their third album, *Fear Of Music*.

CREATIVE HUB

Compared to its two predecessors, *Fear Of Music* was much darker and more experimental in tone. Lyrically, Byrne dug deep within himself, conjuring up lyrics based more on feel than the conscious thought and quirky observation of the previous two albums. Fittingly, he sang in the first person, with few external characters populating the songs. "There's very little past and no future," wrote Jon Perales in a *Rolling Stone* review in 1979. "Just a jumble of sensations, as if it's all he can do to handle right now."

The album was recorded in a number of studios across New York, but the creative hub where the songs were crafted was the band's loft on the Lower East Side. Work began on the album in April 1979 and from the outset, the approach was noticeably different.

"We came into this loft, set our instruments up and did something we had never done before: we brainstormed, we jammed," Tina Weymouth explained in 1979 on *The South Bank Show*, an edition that captured a rare and revealing glimpse of the band as they worked on *Fear Of Music*. "Half of the time, it was just awful, but then all these little interesting things would happen. We'd get it on tape, David would take the tape home, pick out the parts that sounded like 'This goes along with an idea I had for this set of lyrics, or this goes along with a little lick I'd thought of before'."



LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Tina Weymouth's funky, art-punk basslines were integral to the band's sound

For Byrne, the process of writing on *Fear Of Music* was unorthodox. He would write lyrics in "various phases and combinations" then sing them a phrase at a time into a tape recorder. "The technique was not always successful," he recalled on *The South Bank Show*. "But sometimes it would result in melodies I would never have created had I written them on a guitar." He was also keen to maintain diversity across the album. "We made sure no song sounded exactly like the other," he said.

By the time Talking Heads recorded *Fear Of Music*, Tina Weymouth was an integral part of the band's sound, despite David Byrne allegedly insisting that she re-audition for the job three times in early 1977. "Any time David felt insecure, I was his whipping boy," she told Talking Heads biographer Ted Bowman in 2002 – her blend of minimalist art-punk basslines with danceable, funk-inflected riffs was the bedrock of the band's signature sound. Repetition was key to the arrangements on *Fear Of Music*. Guitar riffs are played over and over, while Frantz's drumming was deliberately mechanical across

> **"We made sure that no song sounded exactly like the other"**
> **DAVID BYRNE**

The songs
CONTINUED

7 Air
For all its innovation, eclectic funk grooves and deeply textured sounds, it's worth remembering that there are some outstanding melodic moments on *Fear Of Music*, as evidenced at 0:36 on this track, when the spikey groove of the verse opens up into the emotive and enigmatic chorus. "What is happening to my skin?" implores Byrne. "Where is that protection that I needed? Air can hurt you too/ Air can hurt you too/ Some people say not to worry about the air/ Some people never have experience with air". Essentially, this is a protest song about pollution and the poor quality of air within the atmosphere.

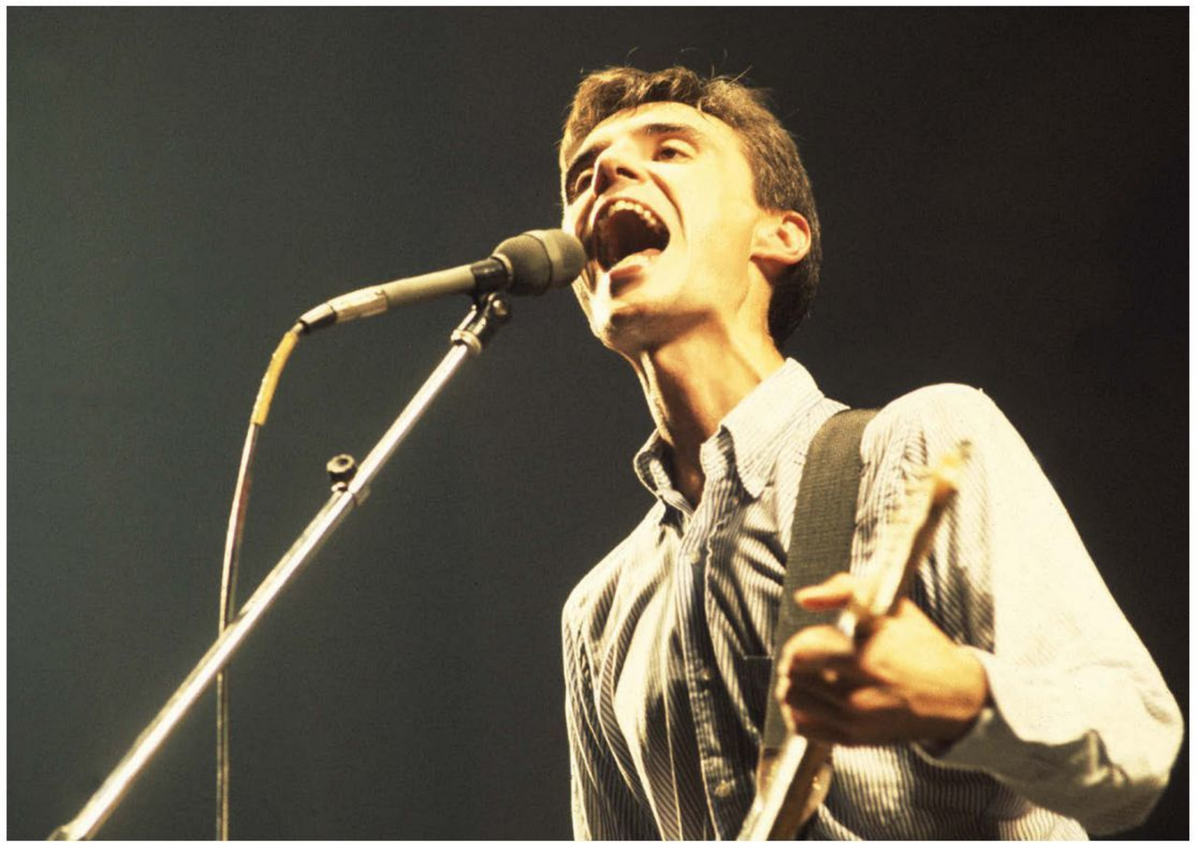
8 Heaven
"The calm after their unusual ominous storm" is how *AllMusic* described *Heaven*, a song written by Byrne and Harrison, within which sublime melody merges with unnerving nihilism. There's more than a hint of sarcasm to Byrne's deadpan delivery, which suggests paradise through a state of blissful nothingness. "There is a party/ Everyone is there/ Everyone will leave/ At exactly the same time/ It's hard to imagine/ That nothing at all/ Could be so exciting/ Could be this much fun."

9 Animals
Paranoia and anxiety abound on this gloriously off-kilter track, on which jagged guitar rhythms and undulating bass are woven around Chris Frantz's unwavering single kick drum beat. The track became a live staple in the early 80s, as the band expanded its line-up to include stellar players such as guitarist Adrian Belew. Byrne creates a character that fears animals are laughing at him: "I'm mad and that's a fact/ I found out animals don't help/ Animals think they're pretty smart/ Shit on the ground, see in the dark." The result is an invigorating sonic whirl.

10 Electric Guitar
Another inanimate object becomes the focus of Byrne's fraught anxiety, on a song that ultimately examines how censorship and the media can influence people's views. "Never listen to electric guitar," sings Byrne with characteristic angst, "this is a crime against the state".

Weymouth's bass is pronounced, flanged and up in the mix, set against the rhythmic chop of the guitars. The song's power is its relentless repetitive intensity, which is heightened by the wavering, fractured vocals from Byrne, while Eno's spooky synths swirl around the edges.

12 Drugs
This was a reworking of a track the band had been performing live at the time, called *Electricity*, a mellow country-tinged song that is completely reshaped here by Eno and the band, with garbled speech, slow breathing, echoes and a medley of strange voices. The overall result is an unresolved and pensive feel. This is a stark, spacious sound, with the metronomic quality of the band once again firmly to the fore. According to *Clash* magazine, the breathless vocals are the result of Byrne jogging on the spot as he recorded it.



Byrne assumed tighter control of the group after recording *Fear Of Music*

the album. "The repetition doesn't inspire Kraftwerk-style boredom or disco claustrophobia," observed Jon Parales in *Rolling Stone*. "Instead, there's a sense of time being held at bay."

CRITICAL RECEPTION
Fear Of Music was released on 3 August 1979 to almost overwhelmingly favourable reviews. It's a rich, powerful and diverse record – abundant in effects, a legacy of Brian Eno's production, that gave the album a foreboding feel. *Fear Of Music* was Talking Heads' first masterpiece, a much darker work that found the band moving into a looser ensemble, incorporating funk musicians and embracing elements of African and World music. As Jerry Harrison observed in 1999: "*Fear Of Music* completed the early vision of the band, yet had a sophistication to it."

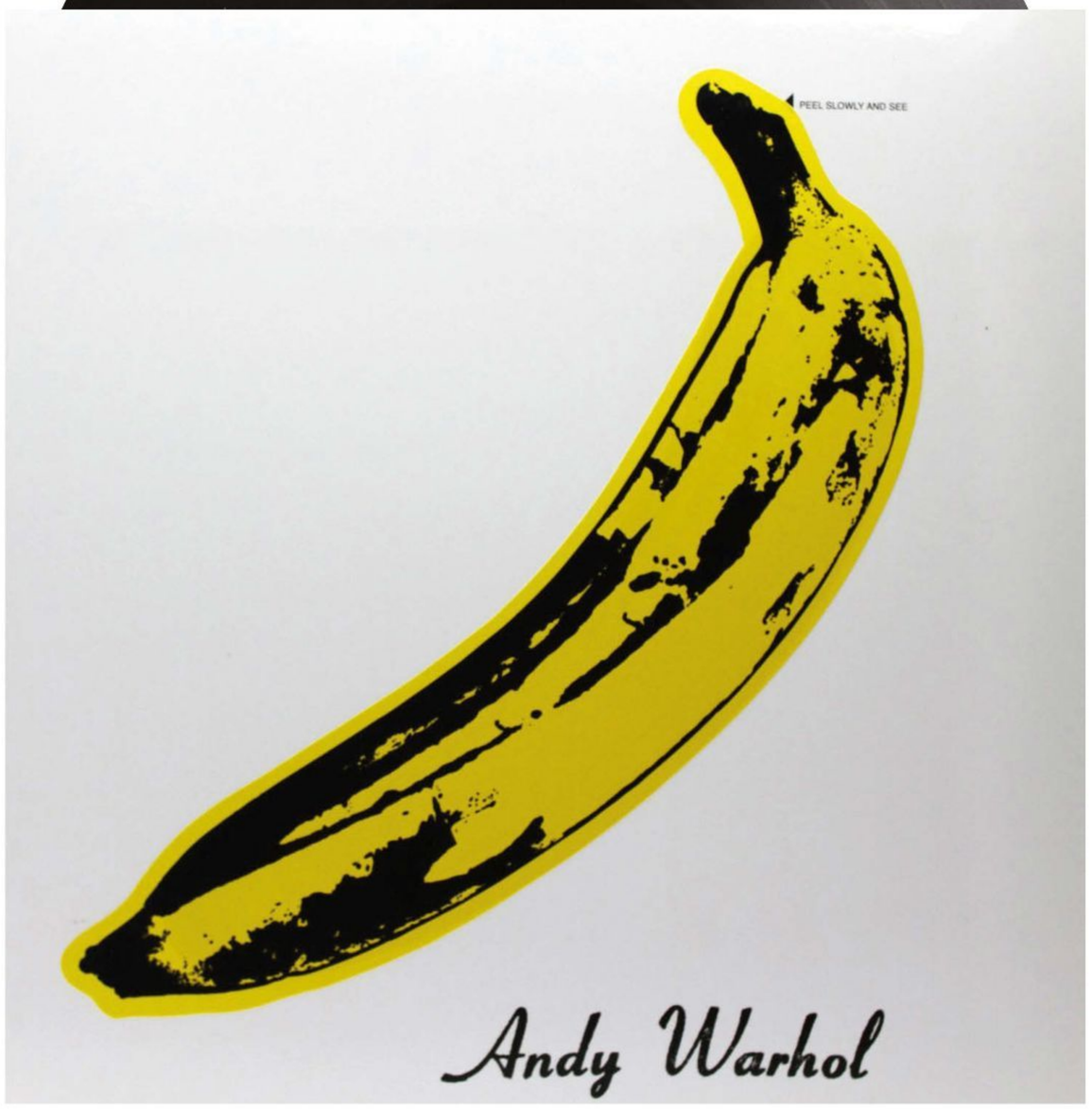
NME voted *Fear Of Music* album of the year, while revered US music critic Lester Bangs described it as "the best Talking Heads album yet", suggesting pithily that perhaps the anxiety-fuelled record should be retitled *Fear Of Everything*. The album was particularly well received in the US, where it reached No. 21 in the *Billboard* charts.

Fear Of Music is often perceived as a transitional record, between the minimalist art rock of the first two albums and 1980's *Remain In Light*, arguably the band's greatest statement. It is also the album that marks the point beyond which David Byrne assumed power, transforming Talking Heads into his own band. From this moment on, simmering resentments would take hold within the band, with Byrne and Eno in one camp, Weymouth and Frantz in the other, while Harrison endeavoured to mediate between the two.

Four decades on, despite such rancour, *Fear Of Music* remains one of the band's finest works – dark, foreboding and defiantly urban. Critics praised the album's unconventional lyrics and Byrne's expressive, deeply personal vocal performances. As Theunis Bates wrote in *1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die*, "On *Fear Of Music* David Byrne turned his withering gaze inward, and dissected his own anxiety-ridden mind." ●

"*Fear Of Music* completed the early vision of the band"
JERRY HARRISON

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY



The Velvet Underground

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO

ALBUM

Original mono pressings of The Velvets' 'Banana' album are highly sought after, but they don't come cheap

Wax Facts

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO
VERVE
1967

£2,000

There are many records out there that are considered iconic, and one in particular is The Velvet Underground's 1967 debut, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*. Recorded while on Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable tour, whose instantly recognisable artwork graces the cover of the album, it was released with little to no fanfare. It was ahead of its time, musically, and dealt with less than savoury topics while their contemporaries were riding high on the flower power of the 60s. Critics didn't know what to make of it, and it was heavily panned at the time.

Initial copies of *The Velvet Underground & Nico* are highly sought after by collectors across the world. Released by Verve records, mono pressings were on the classic blue with silver text label that featured the large 'T' design. The sleeve includes a sticker of the Andy Warhol image on the front that can be peeled back to reveal a flesh-coloured banana. The rear of the sleeve caused controversy due to it containing an image of actor Eric Emerson's torso, who had recently been arrested for drug possession and insisted on payment. The label recalled copies sent out and placed a large sticker over printed copies. The subsequent pressing had the image airbrushed out, yet some made it into the wild.

The mono pressing changes hands for around £2,000, but is almost impossible to find in anything better than Average condition. Airbrushed stereo pressings that followed shortly after have also reached that figure, with collectors desperate to own this legendary album. Reappraisal of the record in later years has shown how it informed the indie, alternative, grunge and shoegaze genres, and it has been established as one of the most influential albums of all time. ***Glen Bushell***

THE ESSENTIAL

Dream Pop

Where pop meets shoegaze, often with ethereal, ghostly results. Daniel Dylan Wray gets deeply atmospheric

As a genre term, dream pop embodies some of the same characteristics as the music it describes: it's hazy, ever-shifting, often undefinable and yet somehow distinctly recognisable. It overlaps with various other genres, most notably shoegaze, and it can veer into indie, pop, ambient, slowcore, post-punk and techno. One could argue records by the likes of My Bloody Valentine, The Cure and Young Marble Giants all drift into the realm of dream pop from time to time but, due to their prominent association with other genres, for the purpose of this list such artists do not feature.

Instead, this essential collection focuses on records that, while certainly touching upon other genres, have come to define the dream pop term and give it its sonic template. This is a template rich in texture, smothered in immersive atmospheres, swirling melodies and dreamy vocals; a sound that creates a place for listeners to bathe in, to plunge into and get lost and engulfed in. Like the most beautiful of dreams or the most potent of drug experiences, it's music that can transport you to another place.

The term itself is credited to have come from Alex Ayuli of A.R. Kane, a pivotal band who also feature here, and it came to prominence in the late 80s and early 90s. Instead of focusing on verses and choruses, or being led by riffs on guitars, the music favoured a more ambiguous and often abstract route – moving at a slower pace and unfurling like fog, moving in unpredictable ways and sneaking up on you.

In order to provide an eclectic presentation of records from the genre, no artist features more than twice in this list, but that's not to say they don't merit inclusion. Cocteau Twins for example, arguably the defining band of the genre, could rightfully be featured here multiple times. While as a genre dream pop largely had its boom period during the 1990s, there are artists that have carried forward the momentum, taking it into new places or simply keeping it alive. In order to capture a sense of this evolution, some more contemporary releases have also been included here.

For pricing, we have used Discogs' Median price based on the UK first pressing, unless otherwise stipulated.

40 THE CHURCH
STARFISH
ARISTA 1988

Australian outfit The Church may be more synonymous with alternative or indie rock, but on their fifth album they entered into a sonic territory that became softer, more textural and generally dream pop in tone. Guitars are still very much at the forefront of *Starfish* and it's song-heavy, but its knack for tapping into that hazy middle ground between texture and melody is a pleasing one from a surprising source.

AVERAGE £9.43

39 THE CHAMELEONS
STRANGE TIMES
GEFFEN 1986

A bit of an unexpected turn for the post-punk outfit on album number three. While the jangly, often jagged edges of earlier work are still present here, the band deliver something a lot more realised, produced and textural that frequently drifts into dreamy and hypnotic territory whilst still possessing some pop smarts, too.

AVERAGE £22.21

38 ASHRAE FAX
STATIC CRASH
HOT RELEASES 2011

Originally released in 2003, there's no escaping Liz Fraser's influence on this record's vocals, but rather than replicate her band's sound this album pushes into new and more contemporary terrain. Propelled forward with a heavy electronic pop presence that often borders on coldwave, it's often as euphoric as it is reserved, but succeeds in doing something new with the genre while retaining its original tone and style.

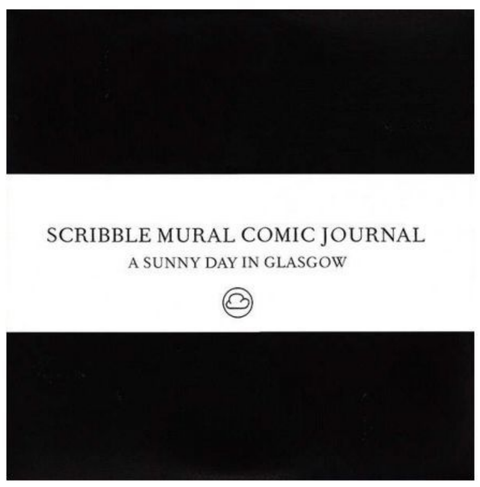
AVERAGE (US) £7.89

37 BELONG
COMMON ERA
KRANKY 2011

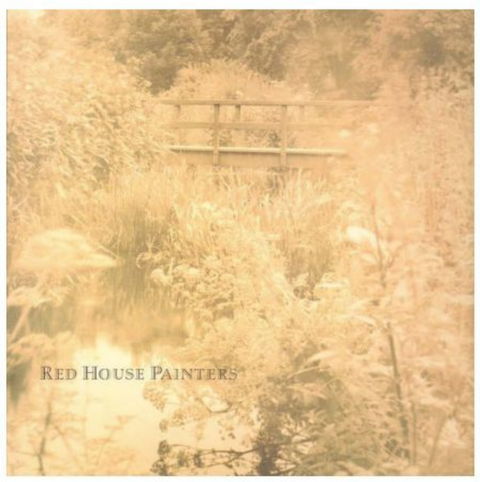
A relatively modern day offering from the ever-excellent Kranky Records. A misty record that melds shoegaze, drone, rock and ambient, that when combined with the hidden yet powerful vocals of Turk Dietrich finds itself in suitably dreamy territory, often shifting from harsh sonic landscapes to softer, glassier tones.

AVERAGE (US) £14.99

36 BEL CANTO
BIRDS OF PASSAGE
NETTWERK 1989
The Norwegian band create dreamy sonic landscapes utilising more electronics than many contemporaries. The result is an album that glides between synth-pop, ambient and dream pop, with almost a touch of new age gleam to it, plus Anneli Drecker's vocals always feel like the most perfectly fitting accompaniment to any sound they explore.
AVERAGE (SWEDEN) £13.82

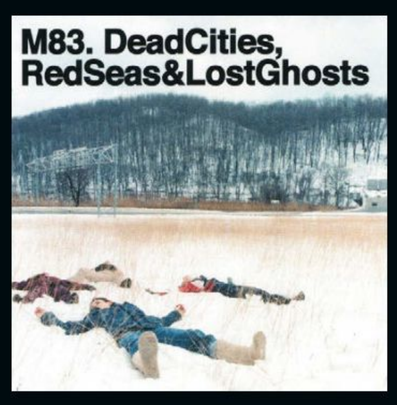


35 A SUNNY DAY IN GLASGOW
SCRIBBLE MURAL COMIC JOURNAL
RUINED POTENTIAL 2007
The debut album from this American outfit was released some time after the dream pop boom had subsided, but years later the band managed to reimagine it into something that felt contemporary and of the time. Some of the textures explored harsher and more electronic territory, but coupled with the harmonious compelling voice of Lauren Daniels, the album finds itself picking up where many others left off.
AVERAGE (US) £46.50

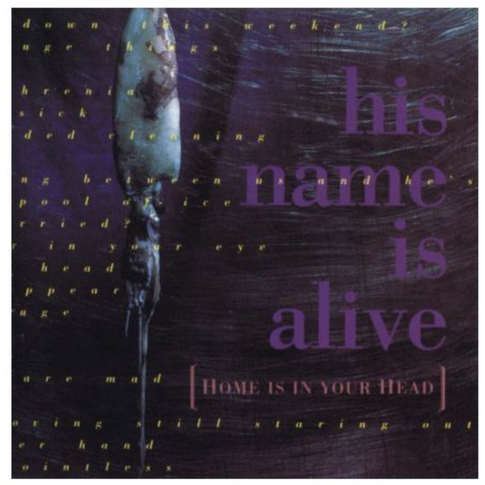


34 RED HOUSE PAINTERS
RED HOUSE PAINTERS
4AD 1993
An album that spans slowcore, indie and folk as much as dream pop, but Mark Kozelek's rich-yet-tender voice, combined with brooding acoustics, stretched out melodies and a general humming warmth to the production finds this record slotting into place amongst other dream pop records. The immense texture and ambience the album exudes acts as a stark contrast to Kozelek's current waffling incarnation.
AVERAGE £59.62

33 AIR
THE VIRGIN SUICIDES
VIRGIN 2000
On the soundtrack to Sofia Coppola's debut film of the same name, Air managed to create a piece of work that was most befitting of their name: an airy, breezy, dreamy, hypnotic record that explored space and texture plentifully. Perhaps more typically structured, melodic and song-based than many other inclusions here, but an unquestionably rich and seductive listen nonetheless.
AVERAGE £19.34



32 M83
DEAD CITIES, RED SEAS & LOST GHOSTS
MUTE 2003
A potent blend of electronics, pop, post-rock and ambient collide for this more contemporary exploration of the genre. Whilst on occasion it's livelier and more visceral than traditional dream pop records, it also has moments that feel both intense and reflective in their deeply atmospheric and dreamy explorations.
AVERAGE (US) £25.67



31 HIS NAME IS ALIVE
HOME IS IN YOUR HEAD
4AD 1991
One of 4AD's many contributions to the genre, the second album from Michigan's His Name Is Alive, led by Warren Defever, is one that is both dreamy and experimental. The album was recorded on a four-track in Defever's basement. Be it stirring choral vocals, gently strummed acoustic guitars or mystery unexplainable sounds, it's utterly transfixing in its ability to lure you into its distinct little world.
AVERAGE £13.72

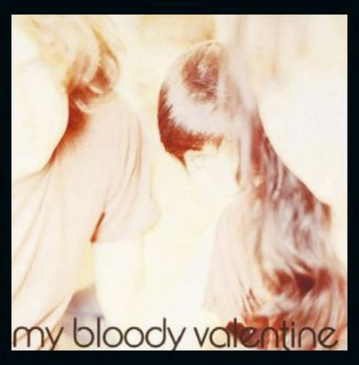
30 WINDY AND CARL
ANTARCTICA: THE BLISS OUT, VOL 2
DARLA 1997
Another act from Michigan, Windy And Carl are Windy Weber and Carl Hultgren. This their third album pulls you into another world from the second its hypnotic opening drones begin to unfold. Perhaps more typically, this could be considered an ambient album, but the processed guitar sounds and tonal palate have a lot of similarities with classic dream pop, despite the fact that there are no vocals here. It's highly underrated, so extra worthy of inclusion.
AVERAGE (US) £22.44

Shoe People

FIVE SHOEGAZE CLASSICS THAT COULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED DREAM POP

MY BLOODY VALENTINE
LOVELESS (CREATION, 1991)
The definitive album of the genre has come to represent the template for what shoegaze is: loud, harsh sounds coupled with soft sweet ones and all wrapped up in endless layers of blistering texture and fuzzed out guitars. An album as influential in the dream pop world as in the shoegaze one.

SLOWDIVE
SOUVLAKI (CREATION, 1993)
Slowdive's second album followed up on all the promise of their debut and then some. As beautifully tender and restrained as it is quietly forceful, the tones that come from the guitars feel as though they linger on forever.



MY BLOODY VALENTINE
ISN'T ANYTHING (CREATION, 1998)
The seismic impact of this band on the genre, decade and guitar music itself cannot be overstated and this debut album is the one that saw MBV trade up from some promising EPs to a band of immense importance. Most bands would be lucky to have one genre-defining album, but MBV have two.

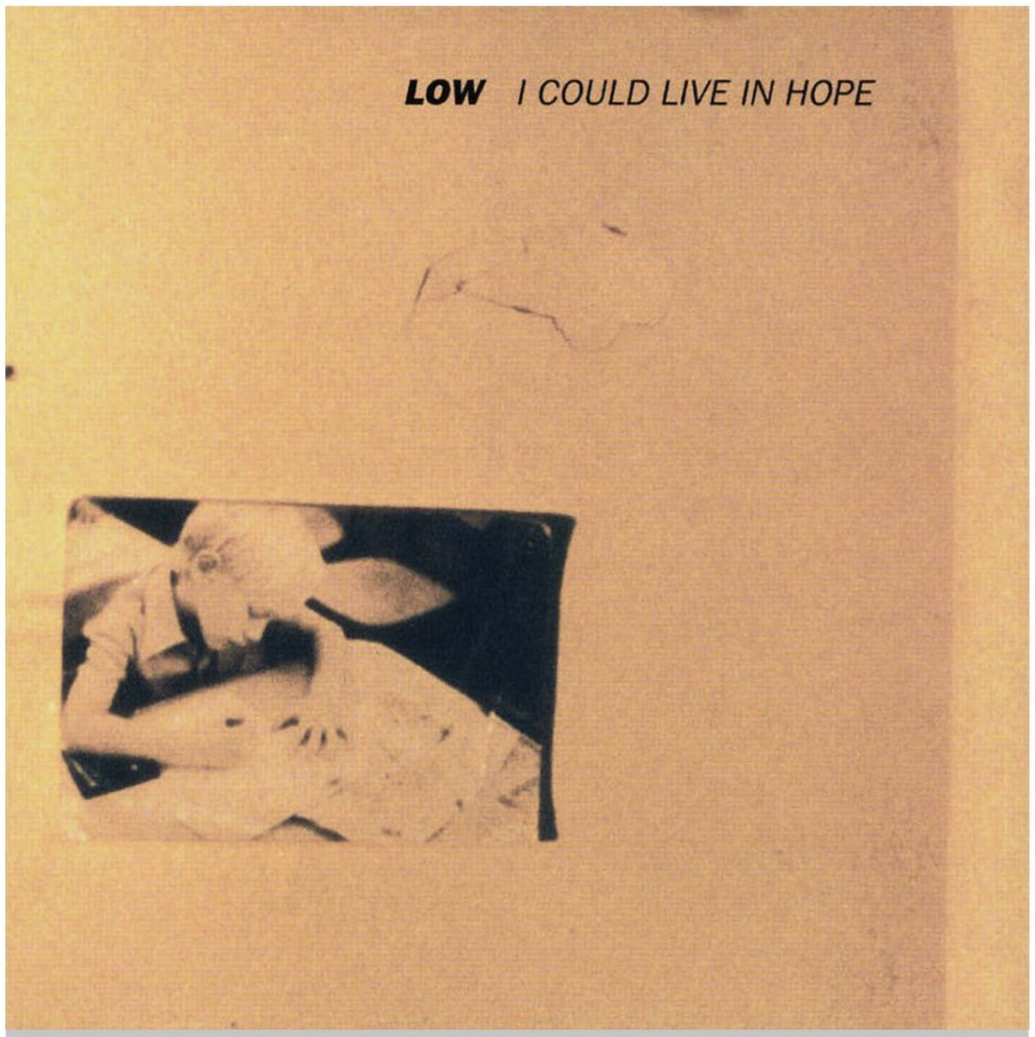
RIDE
NOWHERE (CREATION, 1990)
Perhaps the most pop and song-heavy album in the shoegaze cannon, often feeling as much of an indie-rock bordering on Britpop record as anything, but the band's reliance on fuzzy guitars, tangible production and rich texture also means this is a very close cousin of the dream pop world.

THE VERVE
A STORM IN HEAVEN (HUT, 1993)
Before they blew up and became one of the prominent bands of the Britpop era, The Verve were making much more interesting and sonically ambitious music. As demonstrated on their debut album, which is a lush soundscape of immersive textures, reverb-soaked guitars and Richard's Ashcroft's vocals creeping through occasional bursts of forceful guitars.

The Nico of dream pop: Chromatics' Ruth Radelet

29 CHROMATICS
KILL FOR LOVE
ITALIANS DO IT BETTER 2012
A glistening production of synth-laden dream pop on the fourth album from the American outfit. A record that feels both indebted to the past yet also shimmers with a futuristic edge and takes the essence of 90s dream pop and adds an iridescent noir dimension to it. More electronic, silky and sultry than some of the original works in the genre, but a key example of where it can be taken to.
AVERAGE £26.93

JAKUBASZEK/REDFERNS/GETTY



28 LOW
I COULD LIVE IN HOPE
VERNON YARD 1994

Arguably the album that came to define slowcore as much as dream pop, but given the extremely niche genre the former became, this deserves a place here. The band's debut album would set a template for the power of quiet. Reverb-laden guitars, sparse drums and interlocking glowing vocals sparkle throughout. **AVERAGE** (2011 Reissue) £118.50

27 BROADCAST
HAHA SOUND
WARP 2003

A slightly more experimental foray into dream pop, Broadcast utilised swirling psychedelia, jumping electronics and motorik rhythms around the central voice of the late Trish Keenan. However, Keenan's endlessly alluring vocals – ones that can be as soaring as they can tender and refrained – never fail to suck the listener into a world that is as dreamy as it often is hallucinogenic.
AVERAGE £32.77

26 THE WAKE
HERE COMES EVERYBODY
FACTORY 1985

Certainly an album that touches upon countless genres, from post-punk and indie to dub. However, the breathy vocals, dense production and deep exploration of texture place this as an early album delving into areas that many would only arrive at a decade later.
AVERAGE £35.55

25 A.R. KANE
69
ROUGH TRADE 1988

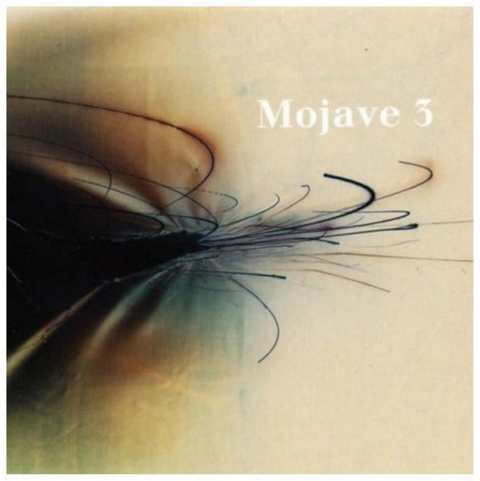
The artists who coined the term dream pop were actually a group committed to the exploration of multiple genres. Their debut is often as noisy and experimental as it is typically dreamy, but this 1988 release was a crucial (and overlooked) one that laid the vital groundwork for new textural explorations in guitar music.
AVERAGE £9.74

24 LUNA
LUNAPARK
ELEKTRA 1992

After the collapse of Galaxie 500 Dean Wareham formed Luna with Justin Harwood of the Chills and Stanley Demeski of The Feelies. Much like Galaxie 500, the band often veer more into rock and indie-pop territory, but Wareham's uncanny ability to craft lush soundscapes and deeply textured cloud-like songs continued gracefully into his new project, too.
AVERAGE (AUS) £89.77

23 THE TELESCOPES
THE TELESCOPES
CREATION 1992

On their second album, The Telescopes continued to explore the cross fertilisation of space rock, noise and psychedelic dream pop, although this album takes on a much more textured and slower approach than its noisier predecessor *Taste*. Plaintive acoustic guitars, swirling atmospheres and rich pull-you-in vocals lead the way on an album that didn't end up with the legacy it deserved.
AVERAGE £18.92



22 MOJAVE 3
ASK ME TOMORROW
4AD 1995

After the disbandment of shoegaze heroes Slowdive came Mojave 3, and with them came a distinctly more acoustic, folk-tinged sound that stood in stark contrast to the electronic ambience of Slowdive's final album. Here, over sparse, moody accompaniments, Rachel Goswell's vocals are left to float over the record in beautiful enveloping waves.
AVERAGE £84.79

21 LOVELIESCRUSHING
BLOWEYELASHWISH
WAVERTONE 1993

Leaning more towards the shoegaze end of things with huge surges of guitars and textures so thick and layered it's like wading through sonic glue, this album remains an overlooked addition to the mid-90s popularity of the genre. Despite the fuzzy guitars and quiet noise that bubbles quietly underneath, the endlessly ethereal vocals of Melissa Arpin-Duimstra add wonderfully dreamy textures to it all.

AVERAGE (US) £63.20

20 DIF JUZ
EXTRACTIONS
4AD 1985

Another 4AD addition to the genre. Whilst Liz Fraser pops up on this record as a guest, Dif Juz's debut was tonally quite far removed from her band. While intense, often moody and ambient, it also features saxophone, off-kilter rhythms and ever-shifting tonalities that expand the foundations of what is often constituted as dream pop.

AVERAGE £20

19 BEACH HOUSE
TEEN DREAM
BELLA UNION 2010

Of all the bands that have taken the formula of dream pop and carried it into a new age, Beach House are the most prevalent and consistent. The Baltimore duo explore deeply layered music that whooshes and swishes around the inescapable vocals of Victoria Legrand, often shifting between hazy pop moments and serene ambience.

AVERAGE £22.08

Retro futurists Broadcast with Trish Keenan standing

18 BROADCAST
TENDER BUTTONS
WARP 2005

Every Broadcast record could easily feature in this list, but there's a real poignancy to *Tender Buttons* in that it would be the band's last studio album, with the immense talent of Trish Keenan sadly dying. A record that is immediately transporting and rich with lucid and hallucinogenic offerings, gliding between weirdo pop, avant garde and wistful immersive ambience.

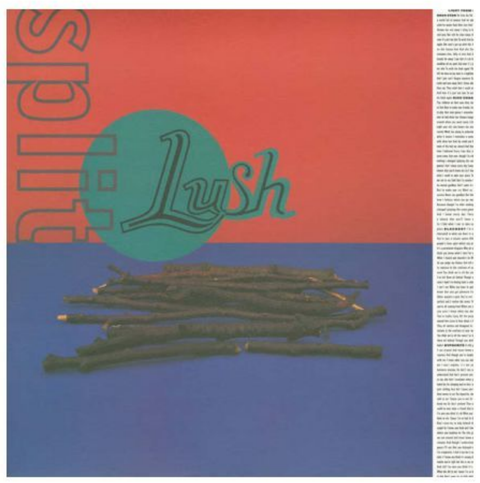
AVERAGE £80

WENDY REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY

17 MAZZY STAR
SHE HANGS BRIGHTLY
ROUGH TRADE 1990

Along with Cocteau Twins' Liz Fraser and Julee Cruise, the voice perhaps most synonymous with this genre is that of Hope Sandoval. The band's debut album allows her voice to float and haunt a record that glides between dreamy atmospherics, alt rock and psychedelic offerings to result in a record that Kurt Cobain listed in his favourite 50 of all time.

AVERAGE £40.64



16 LUSH
SPLIT
4AD 1994

The third album from a band that often walked the fine line between alt rock, pop and shoegaze. On this, the band are at their most introspective and dreamy. The near eight-minute *Desire Lines* perhaps most perfectly captures this mix of dense, floating vocals and slowly unfurling melody and moody guitars.

AVERAGE £46.12

15 THE SUNDAYS
READING, WRITING AND ARITHMETIC
ROUGH TRADE 1990

Jangly guitars, moody atmospherics and a pristine vocal collide to form a blend of pop that was as euphoric as it was introspective. The flat-out pop magic of *Here's Where The Story Ends* could have positioned the band as a real crossover sensation, but The Sundays remain more of a (relative) cult act in Rough Trade's rich history.

AVERAGE £26

14 LOW
THINGS WE LOST IN THE FIRE
2001 TUGBOAT

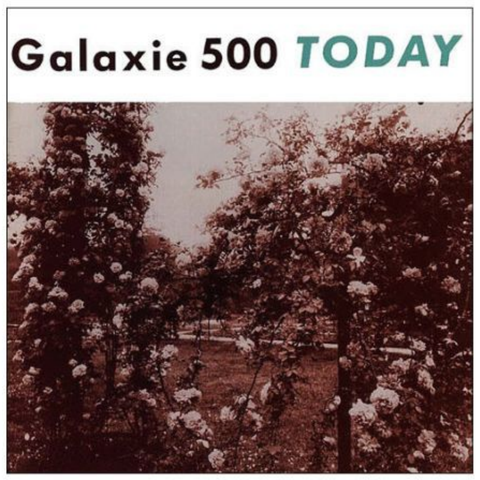
By this stage, Low's sonic formula of delicate, reserved melody with hushed vocals and echo-laden guitars had stretched out and been played with, but *Things We Lost In The Fire* is perhaps the record that comes closest to capturing the bare-bones essence of the band from when they started. Albeit with a richer, warmer glow of production to their delicacy.

AVERAGE £23.79

13 SPIRITUALIZED
LAZER GUIDED MELODIES
DEDICATED 1992

After the messy descent of Spacemen 3, Jason Pierce's Spiritualized continued some of the potent blast of psychedelic space rock that defined his previous band, but also changed the focus to a more textural, atmospheric, often melodic edge. The result is a record that is both the party and the comedown, as well as that dreamy half-asleep place in-between.

AVERAGE £47.49



12 GALAXIE 500
TODAY
ROUGH TRADE 1988

Another album that was as pivotal across slowcore, indie and college rock at the time. Dean Wareham's distinctly wonky vocals might not possess the conventional allure of some other vocalists of the genre, but the band's love of The Velvet Underground and Television combined with the melodic hush of Big Star created a new and unique sound for the decade that would be emulated heavily in years to come.

AVERAGE (US) £24.92

11 YO LA TENGO
AND THEN NOTHING TURNED ITSELF INSIDE-OUT
MATADOR 2000

By this stage in their career, Yo La Tengo had explored indie-rock, noise, pop and all manner of other avenues, but on their ninth album they distilled their sound down to something softer. Gentle pop lullabies with woozy guitar lines and quietly unfolding melodies brush against the delicate yet airy percussion to form one of the band's most quiet yet arresting records.

AVERAGE (US) £35.91

10 BOWERY ELECTRIC
BEAT
BEGGARS BANQUET 1996

Critically revered at the time and named rock LP of the year by *Melody Maker*, this 1996 album has been banished to the huge pile of brilliant but largely forgotten records. Its mix of beats, pulsing ambience, hushed vocals, subtle electronics and engulfing atmospheres positions this as one of the great albums of the era and the genre, arguably a touchstone for both trip hop and dream pop. **AVERAGE** £47.36

9 FELT
IGNITE THE SEVEN CANNONS
CHERRY RED 1985

Produced by Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie and featuring a knockout guest vocal performance from Liz Fraser on *Primitive Painters*, this album could warrant inclusion for that connection alone. However, on top of that, the layered jangle guitars, rich keyboards and the otherworldly yet fragile vocals of singer Lawrence find this as an album that sits beautifully between indie and dream pop.
AVERAGE £29.82

8 GALAXIE 500
ON FIRE
ROUGH TRADE 1989

Galaxie 500's follow-up album trumps their first, *Today*, as they delve further into their idiosyncratic world of wonky vocals, off-kilter melodies, slowed-down grooves and quietly screeching guitar solos. A record that successfully manages to feel quiet and tender as often as it does raucous and wild.
AVERAGE £30.52

7 GROUPER
DRAGGING A DEAD DEER UP A HILL
TYPE 2008

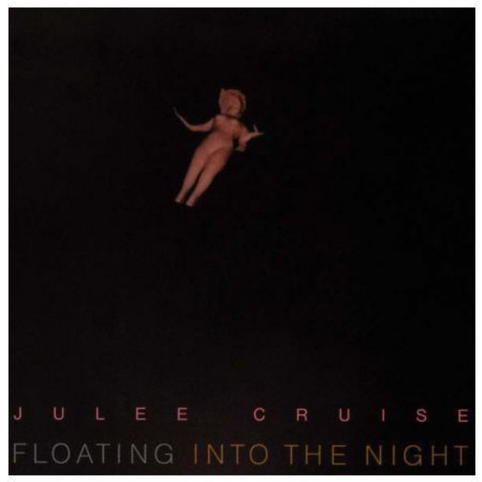
Liz Harris of Grouper has the kind of voice that unplugs you from the world in an instant. When combined with her deeply textural and often intense sonic landscapes, she creates a blend of psychedelic ambient dream pop that can be as stirring as it can escapist. On her fifth album, she projects a particularly potent combination of these things.
AVERAGE £60

6 THIS MORTAL COIL
IT'LL END IN TEARS
4AD 1984

This debut album from the 4AD collective may be an album of covers, but it managed to retain a distinct sense of tone and personality. Filled with echo-laden atmospheres, shimmering guitars and a brooding near-melancholic tone, it is most perfectly defined by the shiver-inducing cover of Tim Buckley's *Song To The Siren* as sung by Liz Fraser.
AVERAGE £15.38

5 COCTEAU TWINS
BLUE BELL KNOLL
4AD 1988

Five albums in and the spellbinding Cocteau Twins continue to reach new heights, with Capitol releasing the LP in the US. *Blue Bell Knoll* oozes such a magnitude of texture and atmosphere you can almost feel it leaking out of your speakers. *Carloyn's Fingers* is up there with their finest moments. Robin Guthrie remastered the album for a 2003 reissue, with a 180g edition following in 2014.
AVERAGE £21.38



4 JULEE CRUISE
FLOATING INTO THE NIGHT
WARNER 1989

A landmark record for the genre, that proved as much of a pinnacle sonically as it did cinematically, with much of the music made in collaboration with David Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti being used for his cult TV show *Twin Peaks,* as well as appearing in *Blue Velvet* and *Industrial Symphony No. 1*. The instrumental version of *Falling* was picked as *Twin Peaks'* theme song, elevating Cruise from unknown status. Her voice is the essence of dreaminess, and when merged with dense soundscapes and the hum of a Fender Rhodes it can be a transcendent listen.
AVERAGE (US) £31.38

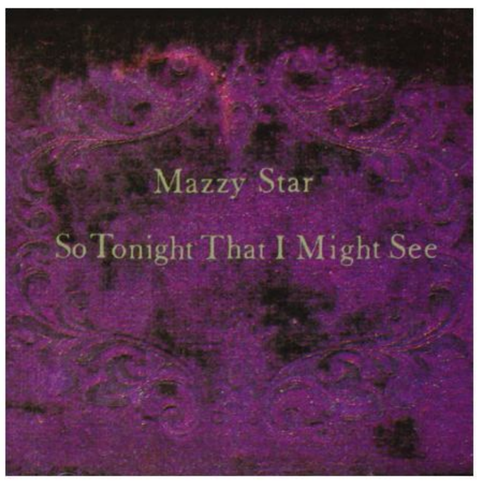
Cocteau Twins (l-r): Simon Raymonde, Liz Fraser, Robin Guthrie

1 COCTEAU TWINS
HEAVEN OR LAS VEGAS

4AD 1990

A landmark record in every sense: era-defining, label-defining and genre-defining. Six albums in and amid personal tensions and drug problems in the band, this could have been a disaster record, but instead something magical emerged from it. Haunting, beautiful, gloomy, dark, immersive and everything else. From the opening seconds of the majestic *Cherry-Coloured Funk,* the album is like riding on a cloud.

AVERAGE £41.99



3 MAZZY STAR
SO TONIGHT THAT I MIGHT SEE

CAPITOL 1993

On their follow-up album, Mazzy Star plunged even further into a dreamy world. The utterly glorious *Fade Into You* is the perfect album opener, allowing the listener to fade into the band's world. What follows is deeply hypnotic and almost trance-like at times, the ghostly presence of *Into Dust* devastating in its beauty.

AVERAGE £84.89

2 THIS MORTAL COIL
BLOOD

4AD 1991

The final album from the 4AD supergroup and a double one, too. Featuring a mix of covers and originals, *Blood* finds the band cementing a sound and style that truly became theirs. Matching beauty and eloquence with a haunting frailty, it remains an absolutely distinctive record that many bands have attempted to emulate.

AVERAGE £32.36

BOB BERG/GETTY

SEATTLE SYNDROME

Sub Pop, the greatest grunge-exporter of them all, turns 30 this year. **Gareth Murphy** meets Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman, the men behind the legendary Seattle label

"There is a paper to be written about the geography of rock," wrote John Peel in January 1989. "Why Liverpool? Why Manchester? Why not Birmingham? And why Seattle? And why, while we're at it, now? A 1981 compilation christened *Seattle Syndrome* dropped no hint that anything even remotely interesting would ever happen in Washington's largest city. Yet increasingly, the name Seattle has popped up whenever music lovers of a certain age gather together to speak of non-chart pop. And as often as these folk have said 'Seattle', they have said 'Sub Pop'."

This, the first major endorsement of what was to become grunge, ended with an uncharacteristically giant prediction. Although Sub Pop had only released a handful of 12-inches, "It is going to take something special," Peel promised, "to stop Sub Pop 200 being the set of recordings by which others are judged for some time. The distant roar is the sound of queues forming. The God thing is coming."

It took two more years for the proverbial skies to open. Arguably the musical event of the 90s, and perhaps rock's last genuine happening, Sub Pop stands as its own unique case study in the history of record labels. It might even be the most English-inspired grassroots movement ever to have grown on American soil.

The story begins in the late 70s. Bruce Pavitt, the label's original founder, walked into Wax Trax, Chicago's newest and coolest record store. Taking note of how its super clued-in staff were mixing up English and American post punk, Pavitt took his leads to Washington state, where in 1979, he enrolled at Evergreen State College in Olympia. A progressive university that allowed students to choose their own major, "Subterranean Pop" became both the theme of Pavitt's studies and the name of his radio show on KAOS, the college station. "I did my best to share tracks by US indies, mostly West Coast punk," he tells *LLV*. "But I felt the strongest tracks at the station were on Rough Trade: The Fall, Young Marble Giants, Stiff Little Fingers, The Monochrome Set…"

STEVE DOUBLE

Bruce Pavitt chatting to Kurt Cobain in 1988

A largely out of frame Mudhoney perform live at the Boxing Club in Seattle c.1988

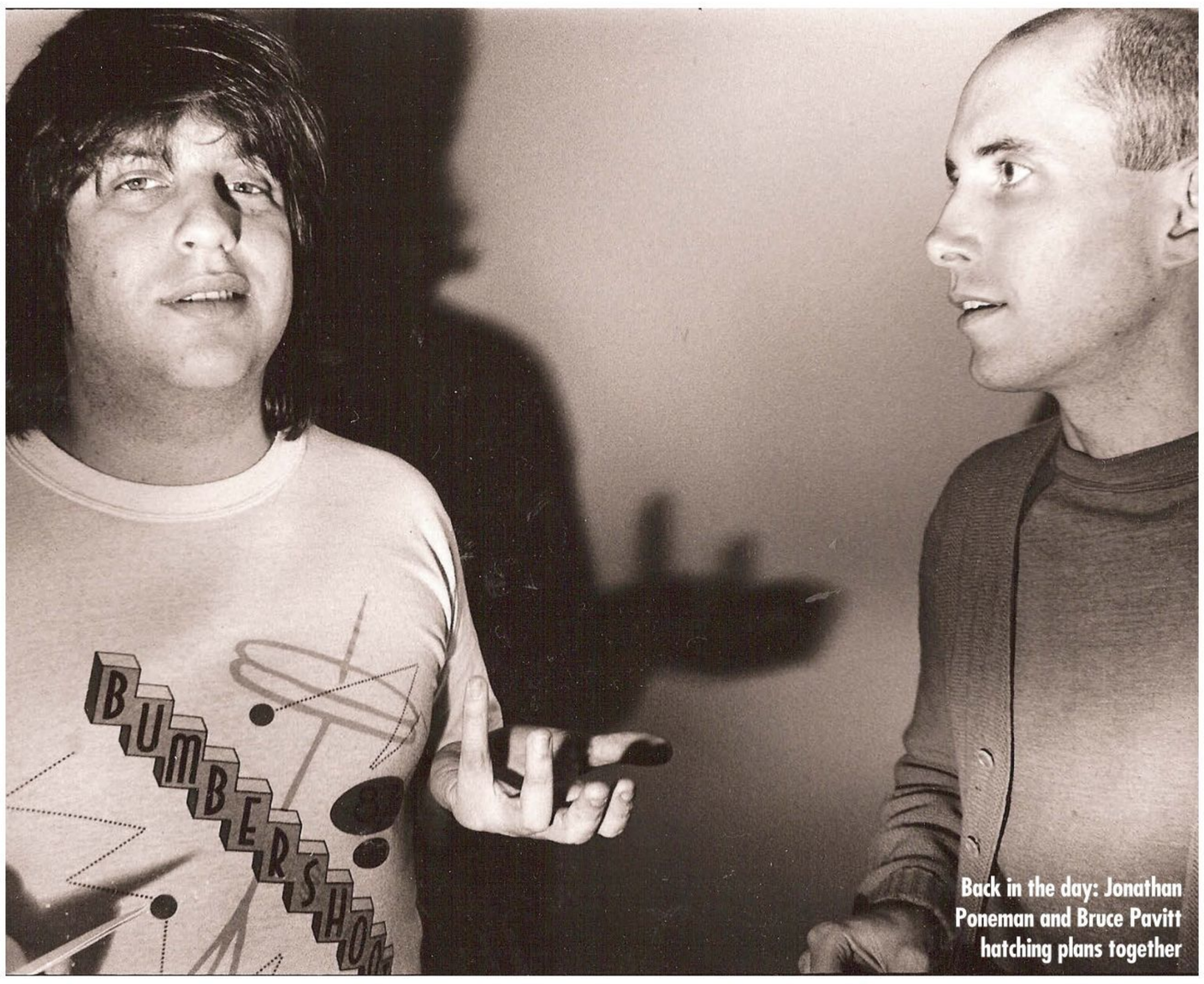
The student quickly came to realise how "England's indie infrastructure was far ahead of the US. *NME* had an indie chart. John Peel and the BBC were playing indie releases. In contrast, there was no central media outlet in the US that was doing the same." And so, while still at college, Pavitt began the *Subterranean Pop* fanzine to review releases and create the first US Indie Charts. In 1981, he shortened its title to *Sub Pop* and began alternating the fanzine with a mixtape of interesting alternative bands – mostly from America's smaller cities.

But Pavitt was not the only college DJ barking up the same tree. Further upstate, in Seattle's University of Washington, there were other alt-rockers bumping into each other at KCMU, Seattle's publicly funded station. Among them was Jonathan Poneman, another Midwestern rebel who would later join Pavitt as Sub Pop's co-boss. Having grown up near Detroit, he got kicked out of a boarding school in Michigan before landing the right way up in Seattle. "I couldn't wait to get the fuck out," Poneman says of middle America. "The Northwest enchants nomads, dreamers and outsiders. It's a place where people came to escape and reinvent themselves."

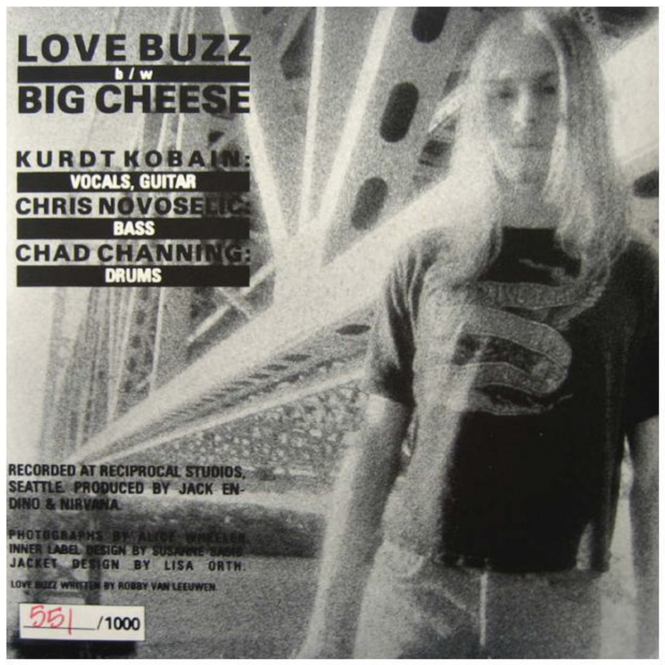
A cloudy town with soft summers and rainy winters, Seattle is built on seven hills between an isthmus and a lake. "When I moved in 1983," says Pavitt of his post-college years, "Seattle was still very working class. Rents were affordable, dining options were affordable. It was relaxed and unpretentious. There was no money, but people had fun."

Another key witness is Jack Endino, a drummer who would later produce nearly all of the seminal bands on Sub Pop. "The biggest employer was the port itself," he explains. "You had the shipyards, military contractors, Boeing and the many US military bases." Beyond this backdrop of docklands, plane factories and sprawling blue collar suburbs, a vast wilderness of forests, wheat fields and mountains stretched for thousands of miles.

Being a college town, there were several youth-friendly gig venues connected to the post-punk tour circuits: The Rainbow Tavern, The Vogue, The Showbox, The Grey Door,



Back in the day: Jonathan Poneman and Bruce Pavitt hatching plans together



The Graven Image and the Norway Center. But the real game changer was Metropolis. Opened in 1983, Bruce Pavitt was its resident DJ and its main boss was Susan Silver, future manager of both Soundgarden and Alice In Chains (also future wife of Chris Cornell). As Mark Arm of Green River and Mudhoney tells *Long Live Vinyl*: "Metropolis was really important. That's when everyone started getting gigs. Some of us already knew each other from college. I'd actually met [Sub Pop photographer] Charles Peterson in the University of Washington. He was wearing a Killing Joke T-shirt in the café, so I just started talking to him. That's how few punks there were. But once Metropolis opened, it became the incubator for many of the kids that would end up in Soundgarden, Green River, Girl Trouble, Skin Yard, Feast, the Melvins and Nirvana."

BROAD HORIZONS

As for record stores, Acme and Tower were the places for imports. Two popular hot spots, Bombshelter and Time Travelers, stocked both indie records and skateboards. Another post-punk haunt was Cellophane Square, run by Scott McCaughey, member of local band The Young Fresh Fellows. Hence the emerging grunge scene having such wide musical horizons.

"Skin Yard, my own band," says Endino, "was definitely influenced by UK post-punk: Wire, Killing Joke, Gang Of Four. Other bands in the area also shared those influences, Tad and Bundle Of Hiss, in particular. The strong basslines of Joy Division and other UK bands seem to have influenced a lot of bass players here at the time. Strangely enough, the Australian scene – which was itself very influenced by UK post-punk – was huge in Seattle; bands like Lubricated Goat and The Birthday Party."

Once Metropolis closed in late 1985, Jack Endino set up Reciprocal, the go-to recording studio for proto-grunge groups. The same year, Pavitt began a local Sub Pop radio show on KCMU while continuing to release his Sub Pop compilations, sometimes through Rough Trade in quantities as big as 2,000. But it was a third central character who added his own vital ingredient into the brewing storm. "Essentially, it was Charles Peterson's images that inspired me to start focusing Sub Pop on the Seattle scene," says Pavitt, who'd been introduced by Mark Arm.

Also a former DJ, Peterson was the guy who always carried a camera. His striking black and white photography not only documented the nascent scene, it arguably influenced its course. For all the stage-diving extremism that looked every bit as dangerous as punk, the downbeat thrift-store clothing that later came to characterise grunge was almost as striking for its anti-fame, don't-give-a-fuck nature. "The fun part was that there was really no pressure," Peterson says. "There were no budgets. I actually made money from Sub Pop by working in their office, shipping records." Hence the no-pose, no-bullshit reporting. With no directives and every click costing a dollar, Peterson stuck to front lines

SUB POP: 5 MODERN PICKS

FLEET FOXES
FLEET FOXES

Actually from Seattle, their 2008 self-titled debut is Millennial Americana at its finest: crafted songwriting, beautifully orchestrated with vocal harmonies and minimal acoustic instrumentation. If you'd like to hear early Beach Boys and Neil Young rolled into one, then sit down, lay back and spark this number up.

GOAT
WORLD MUSIC

In the weird and wonderful category, this 2012 debut caught the attentions of the sonically adventurous. Goat are a Swedish ensemble who specialise in tribal post punk. As the album title suggests, expect ethnic sounds and goat skin grooves. What the sleeve doesn't prepare you for are the distorted axeman riffs and barking Nordic witches. If you still can't imagine that, we strongly recommend you take a dip.

THE SHINS
WINCING THE NIGHT AWAY

The third album and the last on Sub Pop before James Mercer took his Broken Bells sabbatical with Danger Mouse. Released in 2007, *Wincing The Night Away* shows The Shins at their most musically explorative. Although there's a generous helping of bright whistleable alt-pop, the highest points are the darker, deeper cuts, such as *Black Wave*, *Red Rabbits* and *Split Needles*.

IRON & WINE
OUR ENDLESS NUMBERED DAYS

Samuel Beam is a South Carolina singer-songwriter who has so far made six albums under the Iron & Wine monicker. His second, *Our Endless Numbered Days*, released in 2004, seems to be an undisputed classic that enjoyed a 2015 deluxe reissue. Finger-pickin' folk using only a ghostly veil of orchestration, it's all in the writing and entranced performances.

SHABAZZ PALACES
QUAZARZ: BORN ON A GANGSTER STAR

Seattle's own strange brew of arty, psyched-up but simmered-down hip hop. Hearing is believing: flow-of-consciousness rapping skanking through a minimalist trip hop dreamscape. It's like Tricky meets Snoop in a housing project overlooking the North-Western prairie. Home to the anthemic *Shine A Light*, this inventive long player is a stoner's delight.

and mosh pits, "focused on trying to take the ultimate live photograph."

It was the same for the raw sound of early grunge recordings. It was not, as Endino points out, simply a matter of cheap gear and rat-infested basements. His studio had professional-standard 8- and 16-track machinery. "The real limitations were time and money. That, and talent, are what determine the sound you end up with, much more than the limitations of the equipment."

"When Green River's *Dry As A Bone* came out in 1987, I had the basic Sub Pop formula," says Pavitt. Inspired by Factory's trick of making Manchester, Peter Saville and Martin Hannett integral to the label, Sub Pop set out to be synonymous with Seattle, Peterson's photography and Endino's sound. But it was here that a fourth character, Jonathan Poneman, added an extra topping of hustler muscle. Having gained experience running gigs with Susan Silver, Poneman joined forces with Pavitt in 1988. Convinced something was happening, Poneman invested $19,000, enabling Sub Pop to open an office in the Terminal Sales Building, overlooking the city.

"I was impressed with the UK habit of releasing 12-inch singles and EPs," explains Pavitt. "They sounded better. Very few American indie-rock labels were doing this, so our first two releases, Green River and Soundgarden, were in 12" EP format. Our *Sub Pop 200* was a triple-EP boxset." Blowing their dough on the coloured-disc 12"s that won them John Peel's blessing, they were forced to downgrade to 7" singles and start a club system. Subscribers provided enough cashflow

The laid-back Marika Hackman released a couple of albums on Sub Pop in the States

to keep up a monthly stream of releases from the likes of Tad, Nirvana, Girl Trouble, Blood Circus and Mudhoney.

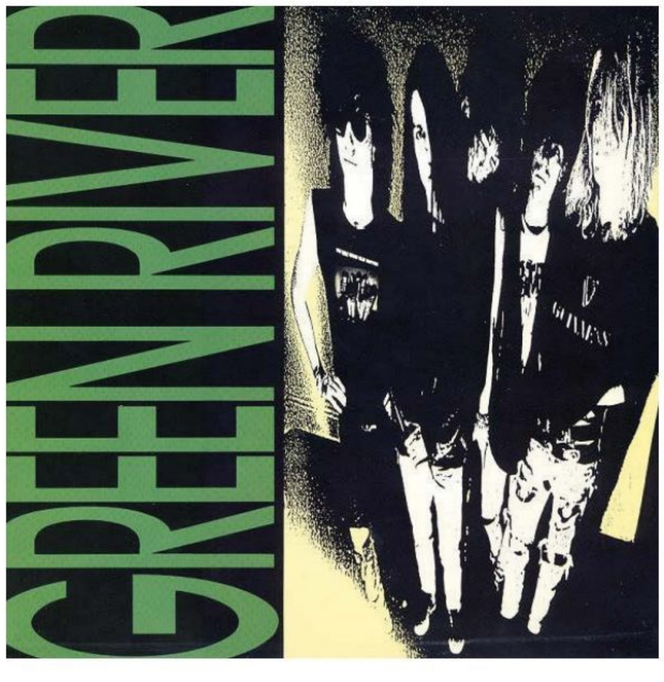
"We went against the grain by resurrecting the 'big hole' single," continues Pavitt, "except that a lot of our vinyl releases had initial pressings with coloured vinyl, or occasionally posters or unusual sleeve alterations. By releasing limited editions, we were able to convince retailers to pay us cash-on-delivery, unheard of at the time. This helped our cash flow and enabled indie stores to have rare versions the larger stores rarely carried."

When it came to getting the word on the street, Pavitt and Poneman knew exactly where to go. "To hot wire Europe, you went through London," says Poneman, who still considers England the world's music capital. "Our first distributor was Southern Studios, and their publicist was a guy called Anton Brooks. When we explained our ideas, he said to us, 'Look, if you're willing to pay $2,000 on plane tickets and expenses, I'll find a *Melody Maker* journalist to do a whole spread'. We just said, 'Fuck yeah!' I remember high-fiving Bruce. We just knew how much it would resonate'."

In March 1989, just weeks after John Peel's plug, rock critic Everett True was flown in from London. The result was a game-changing two-page 'consumer's guide' in *Melody Maker*. Under a giant "SUB POP" headline beside a photo of gig mayhem, True profiled 20 bands (some of them not even on Sub Pop) and described how "the bands and record label hang out together, drink beer and criticise one another. It's a chaotic, creative environment." Unsure if the scene was punk, metal, indie, or if its mix and match approach was a retrogressive handicap, True was hit by "The sheer physicality and sexiness of seeing these bands up and in yer face." Whatever the magic was, he hadn't felt it in 10 years.

"The main rock journalist in the *Seattle Times* was a guy called Patrick MacDonald," explains Arm, who had just formed Mudhoney. "He had paid absolutely no attention to the Seattle scene until the *Melody Maker* piece. Then he took a sudden interest." As for America generally, "We were getting some coverage in the underground press. It wasn't like there was no interest whatsoever. The thing about America is that it's 3,000 miles wide, and in those days, underground fanzines

After drumming for label mates Fleet Foxes, Josh Tillman became Father John Misty and signed a solo deal with Sub Pop



JOOST VANDEBRUG / EMMA TILLMAN

circulated in regional pockets. Whereas England had that full-on press. Three big music weeklies, all based in London."

By the autumn of 1989, Mudhoney were supporting Sonic Youth while Tad and Nirvana toured Europe. But it was on a triple Sub Pop bill at London's LameFest where, according to legend, Nirvana dethroned Mudhoney. "Actually," laughs Arm, "in that Astoria show, they had equipment failure and were kind of a shambles. But it didn't really matter because one show is not going to change things either way."

Although the unsteady performance inspired *Melody Maker* to report that "Nirvana is Sub Pop's answer to The Beatles," Kurt Cobain's rendezvous with rock stardom was delayed by exploding drummers. "The event that really did change things," believes Arm, "was the arrival of Dave Grohl several months after that tour. For me, that's when Nirvana became a consistently great band."

Like Soundgarden before them, Nirvana were lured away by a lucrative deal. This time, however, Sub Pop negotiated a 2% cut on *Nevermind* – effectively a golden handshake that financed new albums by Mudhoney, Sebadoh, Codeine and others. The gold rush was entering its endgame. By 1991, other Seattle groups, notably Pearl Jam and Alice In Chains, began exploding on major labels.

LONDON CALLING

Sub Pop's strategy to document an entire scene via London is why the whole world now speaks of grunge, Seattle, Nirvana, Mudhoney, Soundgarden and Sub Pop like joining dots of a single mental picture. They even coined the "grunge" term. "It was first used commercially by Sub Pop in the summer of 1988," explains Pavitt. "In our sales sheet, I described Green River as 'Ultra-loose GRUNGE that destroyed the morals of a generation'." Everett True's spread picked up on the deliciously sonic word, describing Mudhoney as "Raging primal grunginess". In a period synonymous with hi-fi pop, the idea of raw, untreated guitar

Welcome to the masked ranks of Swedish tribal noiseniks Goat

sewage became a badge of honour, similar to the original etymology of punk. Through journalistic necessity, "grunge" came to denote all the DIY indie rock of a time and place.

But the secret to its worldwide appeal was always the diversity. As Peterson puts it: "If the scene had been 10 Mudhoneys or 10 Soundgardens, it wouldn't have been as successful. Grunge was a panoply of artists from around the Pacific Northwest."

If the great grunge harvest of 1991 still feels like rock 'n' roll's last hurrah, it's because it happened on the cusp of seismic change. Oblivious that a new invention called the internet would soon transform everything – including Seattle itself – the 1990s was when big money and small plastic began ruining the fabric of street culture.

"The post *Nevermind* period was a challenging time for indies and for Sub Pop in particular," explains Pavitt. "Majors started swarming Seattle and outbidding us. We had two options: get into bidding wars or continue signing creative outsiders." Pavitt and Poneman disagreed on tactics, but in 1994 agreed to the deal of a lifetime. "The Warner sale was unique in that they had a minority stake and couldn't really force us to do anything we didn't want." In theory, that is. For as Pavitt soon felt, "There was always

> "I REALLY ENJOYED THE LARGER CANVAS OF THE VINYL FORMAT. THE IMPACT OF THE CD WAS LESS POWERFUL"
>
> **BRUCE PAVITT**

On A Plane: the Sub Pop shop at Seattle airport

an implicit understanding that they hoped we'd sign the next Nirvana."

But it wasn't just big money, it was also the underlying source of the boom; plastic products that were cheaper to manufacture yet sold at twice the price. "I became less enamoured with the record industry once CDs started to dominate. I really enjoyed the larger canvas of the vinyl format. The impact of the CD was less powerful." Disillusioned on all fronts, the original founder left Sub Pop and moved to Orcas Island to raise a family.

Poneman kept the show on the road and remains the boss. In more recent years, Sub Pop has signed acts as diverse as Fleet Foxes, The Shins, CSS, Iron and Wine, Father John Misty, Shabazz Palaces and others. He puts his lucky roll down to fatalism. "We're gonna die, right? So when you've nothing to lose, it's easier to just keep going, thinking what the hell!"

The city has been taken over by Microsoft and Amazon, but Sub Pop is still a Seattle indie of 65 staffers operating on the left-field of the Warner family. Unlike its big-city cousins Atlantic, Elektra, WBR and Sire, Sub Pop has stuck to its own niche, in large part thanks to the formation of Alternative Distribution Alliance, which carries hip American indies Secretly Canadian, Matador, Dual Tone and Sub Pop – and the label even has its own store at Seattle airport.

"Making sure wages get paid has been a constant worry for 30 years," admits Poneman. "But you never tire of discovering new music. I see my role as custodian. I turn the lights on in the morning and turn them off in the evening." Keeping things running so that a younger gang can keep bringing new bands to new audiences, he's even philosophical about the industry crash. "I prefer the way things are now. Compared to what's happening in tech and politics, today's music business is going against the tide of corporate concentration. Big money can no longer control music. They can't even turn profits." Back to what he calls "shoestring insurgency," Poneman looks across today's depleted landscape of indie survivors and laughs, "The meek shall inherit the earth!" ●

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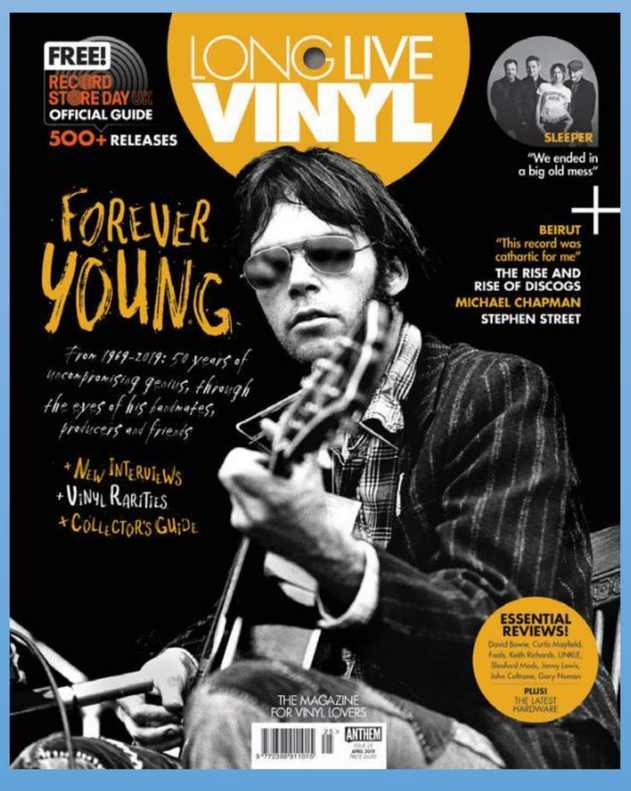

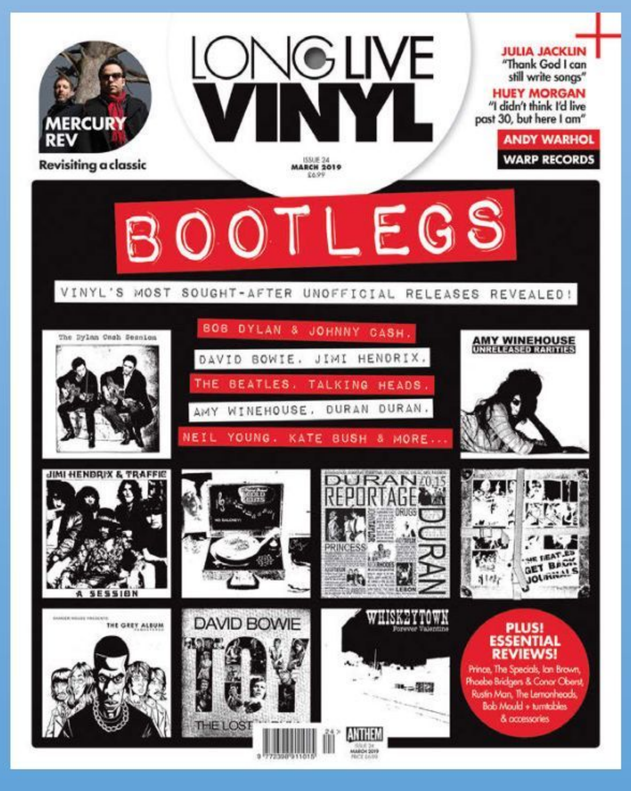

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DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Blue Note is unquestionably the most iconic jazz label there's ever been. It's also, as **Mark O'Shaughnessy** explains, a complete minefield to collect

For the uninitiated, Blue Note is one of the most important jazz record labels ever. In fact, the words themselves have become synonymous with the words 'jazz recordings', with the two completely inseparable in many fans' eyes, including mine.

Blue Note was founded in central NYC in 1939 by Alfred Lion and Max Margulis. When asked how they came by the name for the label, they said it was taken from the 'blue notes' sometimes played by musicians within both jazz and blues.

The label started out focusing on the recordings of 'Trad Jazz' artists and popular Swing groups of the 1930s/1940s era, but by the mid-late 1940s, Blue Note began to switch its attentions to the modern jazz sounds of Hard Bop and Bebop, which were being massively popularised by groundbreaking artists such as Art Blakey, Ike Quebec and Thelonious Monk, all of whom recorded some incredible sessions, many of which Blue Note issued themselves.

These early releases were confined to shellac discs, as actual vinyl pressings didn't come along until the early 1950s, and the first Blue Note releases were pressed on 10" format, not 12". I've never owned an original Blue Note 78 nor original 10", they are gold dust and on the rare occasions they do appear, they are in horrendous condition. We dealers have an old saying: 'shellac was made to crack'.

Once the floodgates had opened in the early 1950s and America was basking in its post-war economic boom, Blue Note records truly came into its own and unleashed hundreds of albums onto an ever-expectant global jazz-buying market.

The very early releases were limited to USA pressing and distribution only, but it wasn't long before Blue Note began reaching out across the continents and established pressing and distribution foothold deals all over the world. Some of these early UK-pressed releases are now extremely valuable, well worth keeping a sharp eye out for. France also jumped onto the Blue Note bandwagon early, and they too released many, fine Blue Note LPs. Germany, too, is noteworthy in this field.

All well and good, I hear you say, but how do we identify these original USA pressings from the myriad later versions? Well, there is no quick and easy answer. You need to be well armed. I myself sometimes get completely and totally lost in the mire that is this huge label's back catalogue.

The first thing to look for when examining a Blue Note disc is the dead wax. A sure sign that what you have in your hands is an original Blue Note USA/NYC pressing is the often truncated type RUDYVANGELDER (in caps) stamped into the deadwax, accompanied somewhere within that same area by a very faint symbol of an ear. These two markings authenticate the originality of the pressing, but note the RUDYVANGELDER stamp must be machined, not etched, and the ear symbol must be etched, not machine stamped. I told you it was confusing.

We dealers have an old saying: 'shellac was made to crack'

Another pointer, even before getting down to the nitty-gritty of microscopic dead wax examinations, is the printed address around the label perimeter on the company's blue and white labels. Blue Note records changed address regularly during the 1950s and 60s (going from Lexington Ave to West 63rd St to West 61st St to Broadway, etc), and each time they moved, the addresses on their pressing release and label information changed as well.

Any self-respecting Blue Note aficionado should be able to look at, say, an original first-press copy of Horace Silver's iconic *Song For My Father* LP from 1964 and tell you which company address will be on the label (West 61st) and where the Van Gelder stamp and ear imprint will be (three o'clock and nine o'clock respectively). Even more telling is if that label shows a Broadway address, then what you are holding is a reissue/later pressing and not an original first pressing.

This type of minutiae is not for the faint-hearted and it took me some 20-plus years to be able to distinguish a later 1960s pressing from a 1950s original – and remember that I was schooled in this stuff long before the internet came along to do the leg work for us! Back in the day, I used to drag around handwritten notes and books listing discographies with me when I was in the States – it was the only way to truly authenticate some of these early releases, but it's well worth the time spent acquiring this knowledge when a true 1950s original comes your way, believe me. ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Resolution Records in Bath and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

TALKING SHOP

Square Records

WIMBORNE, DORSET

When the owners of a long-standing Dorset shop decided to close the doors, an Angel stepped in. **Laura Williams** explains

Wandering the streets of the quaint market town of Wimborne in Dorset, you still hear gasps of "Square Records has gone". Its former home of almost 40 years lies empty in prime position next to the town's 12th-century minster, which gives Wimborne Minster its full name. But you only need walk around the corner towards the River Stour to find the newly located Square Records. No longer on the Square but still on the High Street, it's undergone a complete makeover and now sports an orange and blue frontage with a light and airy interior and the familiar fare of records, CDs, band T-shirts and music books.

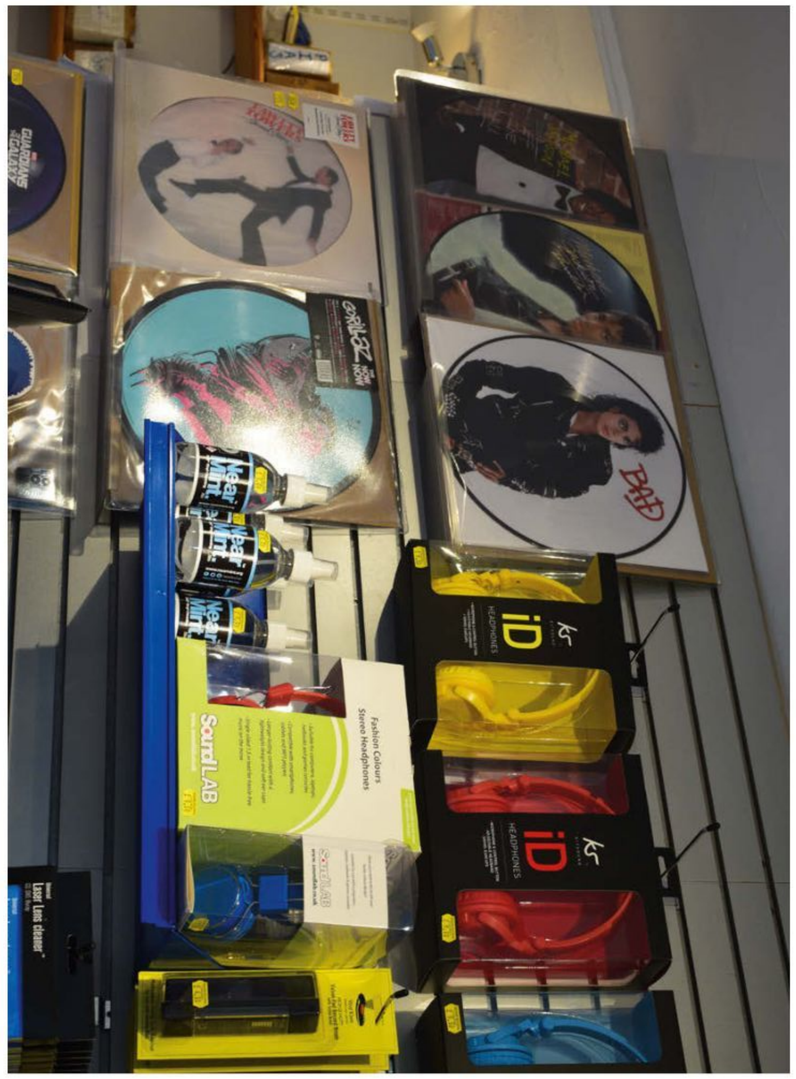
Wimborne's residents claim proudly that the town has more pubs per square mile than any other in England, while every June, the streets come alive with Morris Dancers, musicians and drinkers for the annual folk festival. The town crier, Chris Brown, is so rock 'n' roll, he's been on stage several times to introduce The Flaming Lips and he DJs many a West Country festival under the moniker DJ Dapper Dan. There have also been a surprising number of musicians spawned from the town's cobbled streets – these include King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp and singer Ed Dowie, who released his solo debut on Lost Map Records in 2017, along with doom band Electric Wizard and Brothers In Sound (a 90s trio signed to The Beta Band's Regal Recordings).

It seems only fitting that this creative jewel in the Dorset crown (alongside Bridport) would have a long-standing record shop and Square Records is it.

Square Records opened in 1974 at the back of Holman's electrical shop – founder Paul Holman's parents' business. In 1978, a shop unit in the Square became available and Paul's mum took over running it from there. Paul and his sister Julie worked there from the 1980s onwards, with Paul taking a break to play guitar in 90s band The Lemon Trees, alongside Robbie Williams' songwriting partner Guy Chambers.

When Paul reluctantly decided to close the shop last year, the Angel family, owners of Gullivers Bookshop in Wimborne, stepped in and moved it around the corner to its new home next to the Dancing Moose pub on the High Street. It was the perfect match.

"We own two bookshops," explains Paul Angel, "Gullivers Bookshop here in Wimborne and Westbourne Bookshop in Bournemouth, both of which I also work at." It's a role that's been a long time coming for the new owner. He says: "I asked if there were any jobs going at Square Records in 1987, but there weren't, so I got a job on the record counter at John Menzies round the corner instead. But I still bought my records at Square Records."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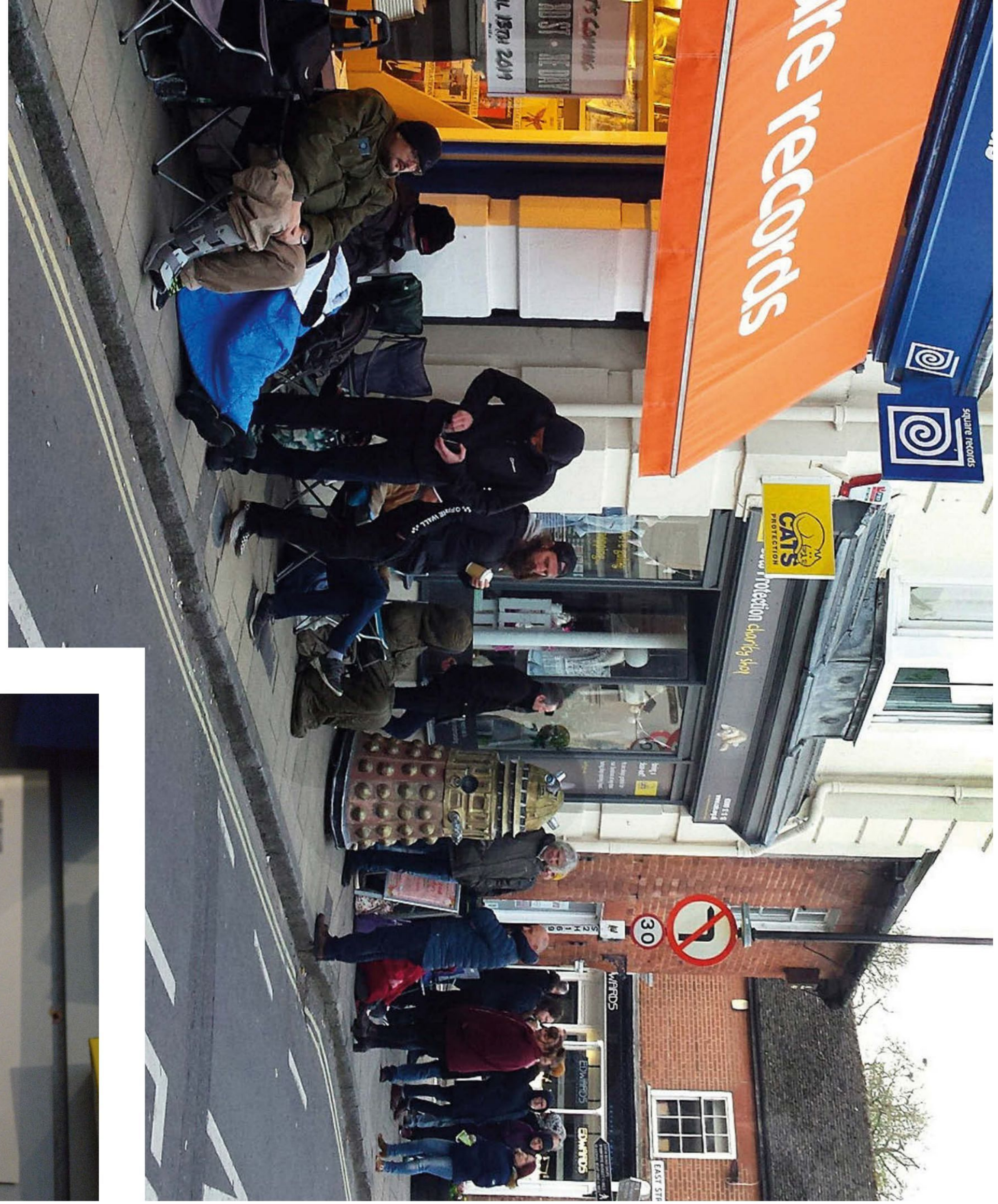

square records
CATS
PROTECTION
WHSmith
EDWARDS
30

The shop manager, Rob Hoare, has worked at Square Records since 1996, coming from a job at Woody Records in Ferndown. He's the buyer and, for many, the face of Square Records. The regulars all know Rob and he knows them. It's a bona fide friendship. The crafty person who creates the knitted dolls of musical heroes on sale in the shop has even honoured Rob in woollen form.

THE D TEAM

Angel recognises this. "Rob was one of the reasons we wanted to save the shop – he's the record store legend to so many people in Wimborne. It's so important to have somebody who knows the regular customers, some of whom have been shopping with us since the 70s."

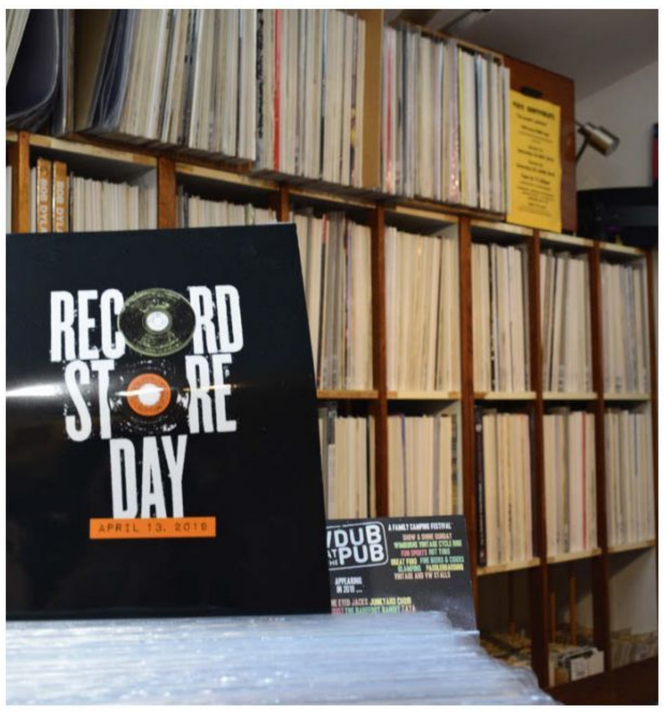
And it's not just Rob who's remained a staple part of Square Records despite it changing hands; founder Paul Holman still works there part-time. "He loves the shop too much to give up," smiles Angel. "He's so easy-going, he's just happy we kept it open. I work there a couple of days a week, but I really am the D team – I'm in the bookshop the rest of the time. Effectively, Rob and Paul run the business. I have to recognise who has the knowledge when it comes to records. What Rob doesn't know isn't worth knowing."

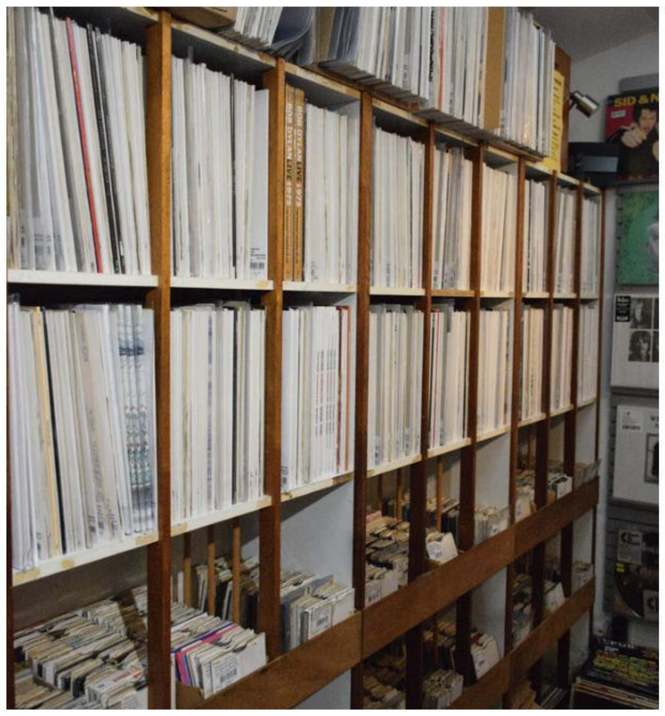
Like most record shops *Long Live Vinyl* speaks to, the internet has had a huge impact on how Square Records gets by as a physical entity. But it's benefited from being in Wimborne – a town which embraces independent stores and has a loyal customer base to draw from. Angel says: "Wimborne's very traditional, in a good way. It has a proper bookshop, a proper greengrocer, a proper health food shop and it's supported the record shop throughout. But the internet has meant massive change in the industry, with so many record stores closing. Square Records' store was in major need of investment and a refit, but it was housed in a building worth an awful lot more than an indie record store could bring in. Something had to give."

And give it did. Angel invested in Paul Holman's business, which facilitated a move to new premises around the corner. As moves go, this wasn't the huge mission that many record stores face when relocating. And it offered an opportunity to modernise and reshape things. Angel explains: "The shop was pretty dark and probably was a bit of a man-cave. We always got a fair few women in, but what we wanted to do when we fitted out the new shop was lighten it up, make it more obviously appealing to a wider clientele; we get a lot more women, young people and families in now – as well as the traditional record store shopper. We get a lot of older people buying jazz, classical and easy listening.

"We stock all genres, though mostly rock and pop, on CD and vinyl – alphabetically, within genres. In terms of numbers, our bestsellers are always things like the new Jack Savoretti album, George Ezra, probably the same as everywhere else. We've doubled the

> "VINYL IS THE FUTURE, IT'S THE BEST OF ANALOGUE. THE EXPERIENCE OF DROPPING THE STYLUS ONTO A NEW LP FOR THE FIRST TIME IS STILL A THRILL"





space for vinyl in the new shop – we had a local carpenter build new racks for CDs and vinyl, plus we have two rows of narrow shelves so the vinyl can go up on the wall. Vinyl is the future.

"I come from a background in books, so I understand the need for something real – books and vinyl are real. CDs are great, they were so exciting when they first came in, but there's something too digital about them. Vinyl is the best of analogue, and while I love the sleeve artwork and the coloured vinyl releases, etc, just the experience of dropping the stylus onto a new LP for the first time is still a thrill."

So convinced are the Pauls of their place in the tangible world, rather than the digital arena, that they don't even have a website – although they do have a Facebook page. Paul's happy with that. He says: "The online sellers' business model is to undercut everyone, to shut down the real-world stores, but if you try to compete on price you end up bust like HMV. The trick is to be better than them when it comes to service, and in retail it's all about the experience.

"When we designed the new shop, it was about making it a place we'd want to visit, with real light and colours and sound and textures. That's why we have listening booths and wooden racks and the same 40-year-old shop counter we've always had – it adds to the experience of being in the real world.

"The only thing is, there's never enough space. I'd like enough space to host more events, although Rob would probably like more racks. We've had a couple of live events since we moved into the new place – it's not huge, but we make do. We've recently seen a decent crowd outside, as well as it being packed inside."

In terms of events, Record Store Day is the big one – a vital part of the Square Records story. With queues forming down the street, they attract customers from across the country, who like the way they approach things – fairly and efficiently.

"Square Records hasn't missed a Record Store Day yet," beams Angel. "First man in the queue is always Fat Reg, he was there 23 hours before this time. Another 100 people joined him overnight. Our local sandwich shop did sausage sandwiches from 6am, vegan as well, which was nice. Record Store Day is obviously nuts, and at Christmas there were times when you couldn't move in the shop. Saturdays are usually buzzing, too, but it's steady through the week. You can set your watch by some of the regulars, they'll be in whatever time of year it is."

Asked what the future holds for Square Records, Angel replies: "We've settled so well into our new home, and people seem to have rediscovered us – it's amazing what the publicity of nearly closing can do to revive a record shop! So, the future looks good.

"I think vinyl will stay with us now – a new generation has discovered it, and while it might not be the mainstream again, it will keep growing. Younger people, especially, will mix their formats – streaming to discover music, downloads if they want to keep it, vinyl if they want to treasure it. My son's been exchanging mixtapes with his girlfriend like it's 1985 – so maybe there's a space for tape again, too!" ●

Beating Heart Music

Drawing on a precious archive of field recordings, Beating Heart's mission is to preserve the music of Africa for future generations. **Chris Parkin** listens in

Old photos often raise more questions than they can ever answer – just ask Chris Pedley, co-founder of Beating Heart Music. "My first encounter with Hugh Tracey was a picture on my then-girlfriend's bedroom wall that he'd snapped of the Mbuti people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo listening through a massive speaker to a recording he'd just made," explains Pedley. "They had this look of wonder on their faces." That tatty old photo, and the story behind it, swallowed Pedley up whole.

Tracey, who died in 1977, was in fact Pedley's wife's great uncle. He was also a pioneer of African music studies who recorded songs across Africa between the 1920s and 70s during a time of profound change on the continent. "I wanted to find out more," says Pedley. "So in 2014, I went to Africa for the first time, to Malawi's Lake Of Stars Festival, and then to South Africa, to the International Library of African Music (ILAM) founded by Tracey in 1954. I met my label partner Olly Wood in Malawi and soon after we came up with the Beating Heart concept."

That idea was to sift through Tracey's archive, "the world's largest single collection of vintage African recordings," Beating Heart proudly declare – at the ILAM in Grahamstown, South Africa, and ask modern-day artists and producers, such as Goldie and Rudimental, to remix, sample and reimagine the music. Since 2018, money raised by Beating Heart releases has gone to the ILAM to help fund their conservation work.

Beating Heart intersperses this remix project with context-setting vinyl compilations of Tracey's original recordings, which still sound timeless and far-out even to 21st-century ears. So far, they've released *Malawi Originals*, *South Africa Originals*, and now *Tanzania Originals*, featuring songs collected from Tracey's visit in the early 50s. "ILAM sent us around 700 tunes to select from," says Pedley. "We went through, picking tunes that made our ears prick up. It was hard to whittle down!"

> **"We went through, picking tunes that made our ears prick up"**

Pedley alludes to some challenging moments during the project's development, but he knows he's lucky to have found Tracey's story. In terms of cultural wealth, the archive is a goldmine. Between 1948 and 1970, when he was most active, Tracey made over 35,000 recordings of more than 250 different social groups across Africa. He also took 8,000 photos along the way. Pedley and Wood have only scratched the surface.

And it's not just Tracey's story that's compelling – so are the music's unfamiliar rhythms and tonalities, and the intoxicating sounds created by xylophone orchestras, Zulu choirs and the scorched-earth blowing of vulture quills.

"It was Tracey's intention to help reveal the beauty and complexity of African music to everyone, both on the continent and around the world," says Pedley, clearly ever so proud to be involved in any way he can. "The recordings live on and there is so much we can all learn from them." ●

ILAM PHOTOGRAPHER / AFRICA MEDIA

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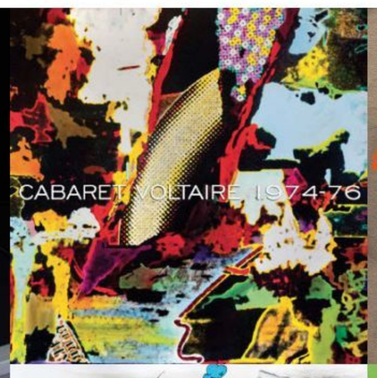
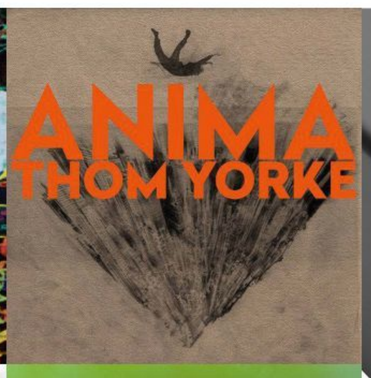
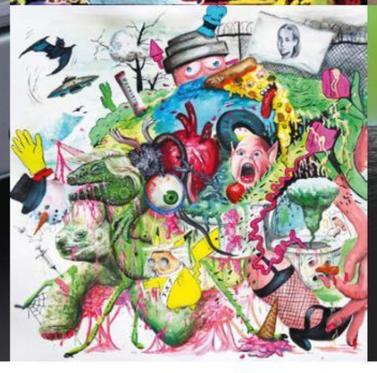


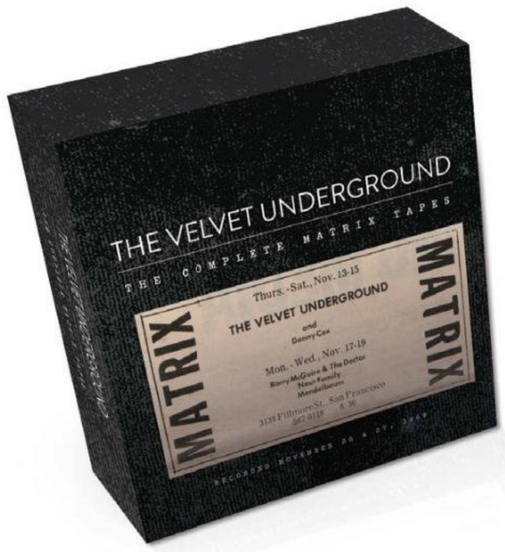


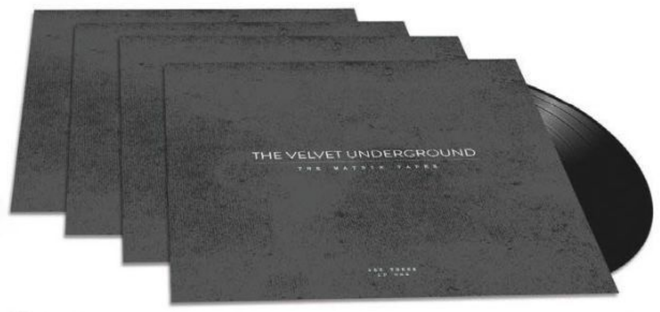


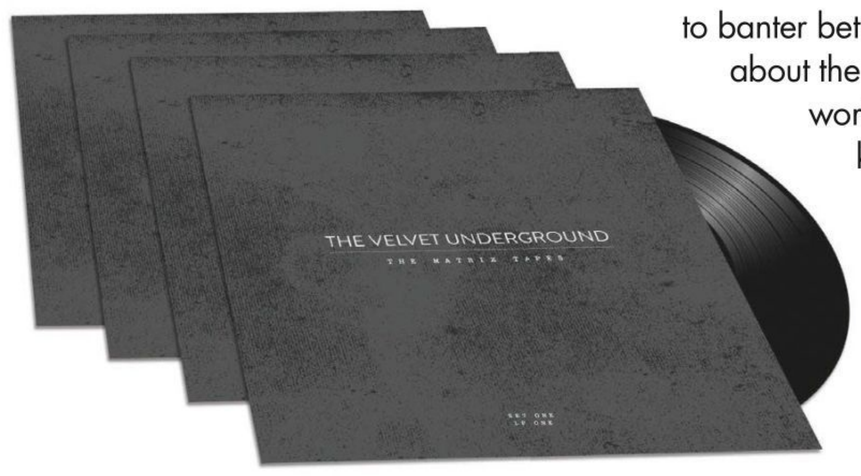
The Velvet Underground

THE COMPLETE MATRIX TAPES
POLYDOR/UME

It's the first time on vinyl for this historic set from 1969 that captures the post-John Cale incarnation of the cult band in spectacular live form. **Gary Tipp**'s life is saved by rock & roll







The post-Cale Velvet Underground toured extensively in 1969, and rocked up in San Francisco at the end of the year for a series of gigs, including at the semi-mythical club The Matrix, opened in a former pizza joint by Jefferson Airplane's Marty Balin in 1965. Over the course of their residency, the club's high-quality four-track recorder was rolling through much of it from a booth at the side of the stage. Two of these shows, on November 26 and 27, form the basis of the boxset. This means that across the 43 tracks there are multiple versions of the same song, for instance, there are no fewer than four versions of *We're Gonna Have A Real Good Time Together.*

The shows, as you can hear, were intimate affairs, and feature a relaxed Lou Reed happy enough to banter between songs ("This is a song about the sorrows of the contemporary world, of which I know we all know so well"). All four studio albums are represented on the setlist, including early versions of yet-to-be-recorded songs such as *Sweet Jane*, *New Age* and *Rock & Roll* (which later appear on *Loaded*). Naturally, enough, Cale's absence is felt and the lack of his experimental edge means that the early songs are entirely different propositions, and not all of the reimaginings translate successfully within the stripped-back band dynamic; specifically a bizarre cocktail lounge version of *I'm Waiting For The Man,* a blunted, rambling *White Light/White Heat* and a challengingly marathon 36:54 version of *Sister Ray*. That's not to say that all the songs from the first two albums suffer, far from it; a hushed version of *Heroin* is utterly thrilling, while the shimmering *Venus In Furs* resonates with a majestic splendour.

The songs from the third album onwards find the band in spectacular form, with the improvised guitar interplay between Reed and Morrison nothing short of miraculous with the breakneck *What Goes On, Some Kinda Love* and *New Age* particular highlights. This is The Velvet Underground fully transformed from in-your-face sonic terrorists to a sensational live rock band with a locked-in groove and an edge all of their own.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Originally released as a CD boxset, The Velvet Underground – *The Complete Matrix Tapes* (Polydor/ UME) makes its vinyl debut as a limited edition, eight-LP, 43-track boxset.

From the druggy pop smarts of *The Velvet Underground & Nico* to the frenzied avant-garde dissonance of *White Light/White Heat*, from the contemplative folky comedown of the self-titled third to the skewed classic rock of *Loaded*, The Velvet Underground never made the same record twice. The reason, in part, is down to a crucial change to the band's line-up after the second album, when Lou Reed, against the initial wishes of Sterling Morrison and Mo Tucker, cordially invited experimental Welsh noisenik John Cale to put his electric viola back in its case and take a hike.

Without Cale's hissing white noise and experimental promptings The Velvet Underground's sound mellowed significantly with the sonic emphasis returning to Reed's considerable songwriting craft. And it is this rounded-at-the-edges incarnation of the band, with the curly-haired Doug Yule drafted in on bass, that features in *The Complete Matrix Tapes*, a highly-desirable eight-LP, 43-track vinyl boxset.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Stereolab

EMPEROR TOMATO KETCHUP/ DOTS AND LOOPS/ COBRA AND PHASES GROUP PLAY VOLTAGE IN THE MILKY NIGHT

WARP/DUOPHONIC UHF DISKS

In 2019, when Stereolab have returned from a decade-long hiatus to play live shows to rapt fans, it's easy to assume the band were always feted alt-rock heroes. In truth, they took a while to establish themselves in a 1990s world when the idea of mixing up French pop, easy listening, the Velvets, woozy synths and the motorik beat of Neu! was something that set the band apart from their contemporaries. Nonetheless, by 1996, when *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* was released, the world had begun to catch up and catch on: an opportune moment to release, according to *Pitchfork*, the 51st-greatest album of the decade. To which one response might be, name 50 better albums released in the 1990s, because Stereolab's fourth is arguably the first when the band so convincingly combined pop – listen to the melody on lush single *Cybele's Reverie* – and avant-garde instincts. While it's a less immediate album, *Dots And Loops* (1997) kept up the winning streak. Its surface lightness is deceptive, the sound of a band reaching for a kind of post-rock take on *Aja*-era Steely Dan's sophistication – and reaching that goal. In contrast, *Cobra And Phases Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night* seems too studied, at moments putting you in mind of a band gagging on their own record collections. As with the previous remastered Stereolab reissues, there's nothing to fault here in terms of attention to detail, with newly released demo material often especially fascinating in showing how songs developed over time. Fans have already snaffled up limited editions on clear vinyl as pre-orders.

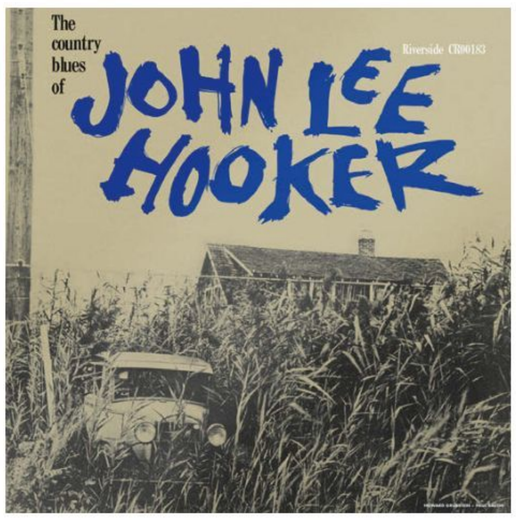
Jonathan Wright

8

John Lee Hooker

THE COUNTRY BLUES OF JOHN LEE HOOKER

CRAFT RECORDINGS



The list of original bluesmen cited for laying the foundations of rock 'n' roll, funk, hip-hop and beyond is legion, and yet curiously John Lee Hooker's own contribution is often underestimated; his propulsive style often wrongly overlooked in favour of lesser-known cult figures. But the King Of The Boogie deserves his crown. By transforming the rootsier end of blues into deeply groovy and grinding spirituals with the repetitive and rhythmic intensity of the East, Hooker cut an exciting new path.

The Country Blues Of John Lee Hooker, however, sits slightly apart from the style he's now synonymous with. In fact, this Craft Recordings reissue tends to get short shrift from Hooker fans that singularly lust only after the vampy, boogie-blues minimalism of hits such as *Boogie Chillen* and *I'm In The Mood*. But 1959's *The Country Blues*, recorded for Orrin Keepnews' legendary jazz label Riverside Records during a period when Hooker was turning out groundbreaking electrified albums in his sleep, betrays the Mississippi bluesman's roots.

Its 13 acoustic Delta blues tracks, with Hooker's deep and easy baritone high in the mix, hark back to the troubadour style. A "close-to-the-soil kind of blues," wrote Keepnews in the album's original liner notes – that he honed during his travels around the South, from the Blue Ridge Mountains to Mexico. With its rough, up-close intimacy, something that is lost in the fire of his envelope-pushing electric blues, this is a portrait of a true artist connecting initimately with his past. *Chris Parkin*

7

AFRO NEWSPAPER/GADO/GETTY

Spoon
EVERYTHING HITS AT ONCE
MATADOR

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Where do you start? It's a Neil Young problem. Well, that was how a friend once excused himself for not knowing anything by the Canadian folk-rock superstar, the artist having amassed such a vast back catalogue that getting a handle on it was too daunting. Anyone unsure where to start with this Austin four-piece, now nine albums into their career, finally has the opportunity. Unlike most alt-rock guitar bands, Spoon get better on every subsequent release (tellingly, there are no tracks from their 1996 debut *Telephono*). It's a succinct, vinyl-friendly project: 12 songs agonisingly selected by singer-songwriter Britt Daniel and the band, which give a genuine flavour of Spoon's unique fractured riff-pop. The album closes with a brand new 13th track, the swaggering *No Bullets Spent*, which points the way forward. Get involved now to avoid a future Neil Young problem. ***Ben Wardle*** **9**

Jonsi and Alex
RICEBOY SLEEPS
KRUNK

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Released on Parlophone a decade ago during Sigur Rós' imperial phase, the solo project of Rós singer Jón Þór Birgisson and partner Alex Somers was one of the last beneficiaries of a major-label system which allowed artists to indulge in creations which were clearly never destined for chart dominance. Now expanded to a triple-vinyl release and supported by the duo finally performing it live around the world, it makes perfect sense; you could file it under ambient electronica, were it not for the fact that it was recorded entirely using acoustic instruments, including the stately strings of Icelandic quartet Amiina. Fans of Eno and Lanois' *Apollo: Atmospheres and Soundtracks* album will fall in love with *Happiness* and *Boy 1904*. Disc 3 is the hard-to-find bonus EP *All Animals,* which adds lowing, hoots and tweets to proceedings. *Ben Wardle* **9**

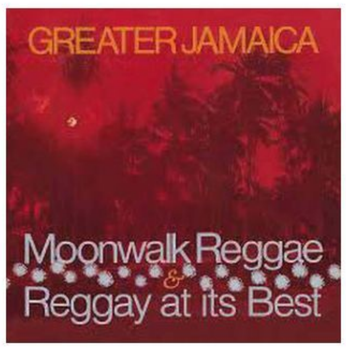
The Lightning Seeds
JOLLIFICATION
SONY

Ian Broudie's musical CV was already impressively well stacked before the emergence of The Lightning Seeds in 1989. *Jollification,* though, represents the moment it all went right for the Liverpudlian songwriter and producer with the endearingly wobbly voice. Broudie's softly reflective tones and expert knack for a winning chorus made *Lucky You*, *Change* and *Marvellous* unforgetable 90s anthems, and the good news is they've aged surprisingly well. Alison Moyet is a welcome guest on *My Best Day* and *Open Goals*, with Terry Hall and Ocean Colour Scene's Simon Fowler also putting in shifts. With Needle Mythology releasing Broudie's 2004 solo album *Tales Told* on vinyl for the first time and a new record apparently in the pipeline, it appears there's a revival under way for an underappreciated craftsman. *Gary Walker* **8**

The Bluetones
SCIENCE AND NATURE/THE SINGLES
DEMON

By the arrival of their third album, *Science And Nature* in 2000, The Bluetones were lost in the wilderness between Britpop and The Strokes. Seemingly aware the charts were no longer a priority, they got fantastically indulgent. Pin-sharp melodies were still here, but this time they were cloaked in punky fractiousness (*Zorro*, *Mudslide*) or claustrophobic country-rock (*One Speed Gearbox*, *Slack Jaw*). A superb self-destruct record, it was followed in 2002 by attempting to revive commercial fortunes with *The Singles*. Even that was offbeat, as it had a full four new songs added. Out on vinyl for the first time, both LPs deserve to aid The Bluetones' continued rehabilitation as underrated mavericks. *John Earls* **8**

Tommy McCook And The Supersonics
GREATER JAMAICA MOONWALK REGGAE
MUSIC ON VINYL



Although billed as a Tommy McCook album, what actually unifies this 1969 collection of commercial reggae is producer Duke Reid. Soundsystem rival to Studio One's Clement Dodd, Reid was producer of the classic ska and reggae released on his label Treasure Isle, and then later on Trojan in the late 60s and early 70s. We kick off with John Holt's gently soulful *Stealing Stealing*, then take a left turn with Dave Barker's *Lock Jaw*, a distant cousin of Barker's Ansell Collins collaboration *Double Barrel*. The MC pops up again later, extolling us to "Don't watch that! Watch This!" providing the framework for seven lads from Camden. Saxophonist McCook appears increasingly on Side 2, with keyboardist Winston Wright performing hugely danceable rocksteady instrumentals. It's limited to 750, pressed on orange vinyl. ***Ben Wardle*** **8**

The Modern Lovers
THE MODERN LOVERS
MUSIC ON VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

There's no more joyous album opener than the "1-2-3-4-5-6!" with which Jonathan Richman announces *Roadrunner.* To appreciate the visceral beauty of this 1976 classic, listeners don't need to know that it was effectively a compilation of early demos released two years after the band had split. Most of its nine tracks had been recorded by John Cale in 1972, before Richman became the cuddly pop ironist who released his 'proper' debut *Jonathan Richman And The Modern Lovers* in July '76. This is the one, though: the JR on this record anticipates the punk-rock revolution five years before it happened: all nervous energy and suburban ire. Even if you already own this, there are at least two reasons to buy the reissue: one, it's pressed on convincingly silver vinyl and secondly, you've probably worn out the copy you own. *Ben Wardle* **9**

18+

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AVAXHOME-

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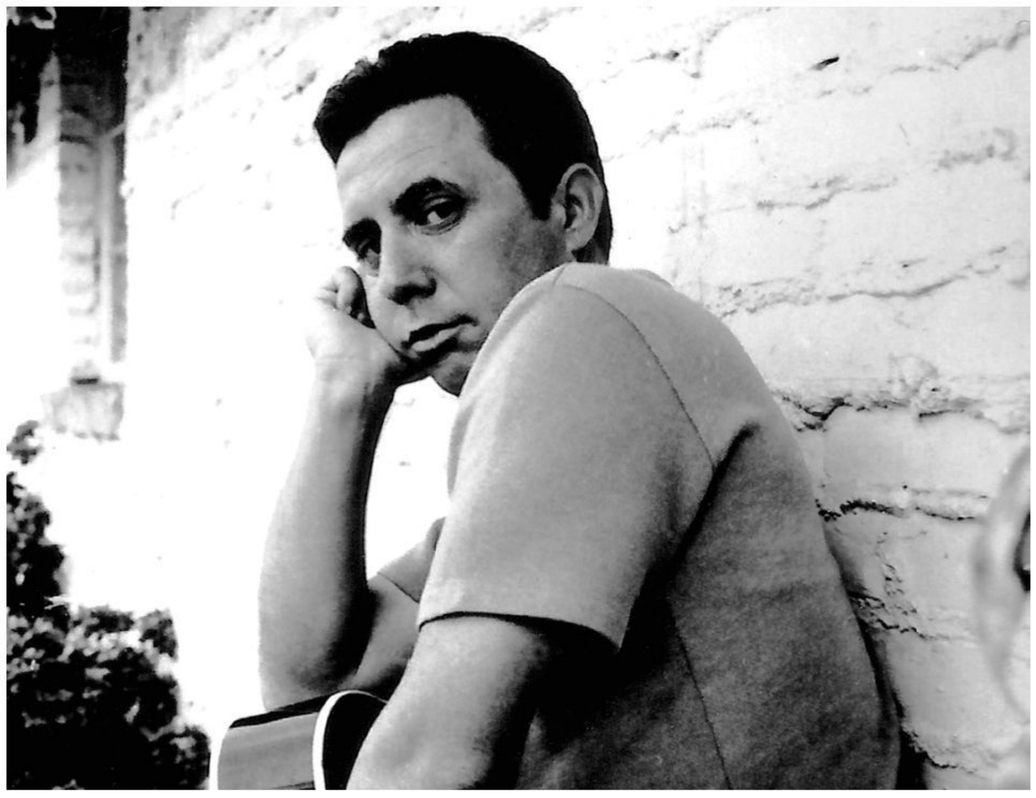
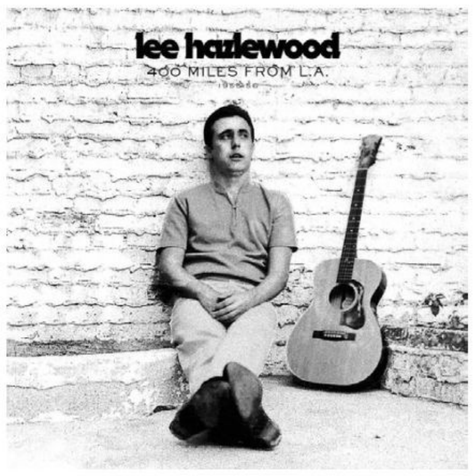


Lee Hazlewood

400 MILES FROM L.A. 1955-56

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC



Reviewing Lee Hazlewood's 1973 album *Poet, Fool Or Bum*, critic Charles Shaar Murray saw no need to waste words. "Bum," he wrote, with succinct snarkiness. It's a review that even now says much about how Hazlewood is viewed.

That's because while other purveyors of soft psychedelia and baroque pop from the era have been granted the benefit of full critical reappraisals – Jimmy Webb springs immediately to mind – Hazlewood is still regarded in many quarters as, well, a bit naff. Sure, the jury of pop culture may accept his work with Nancy Sinatra and Duane Eddy as worth noting, and bubblegum pop classic *Nancy & Lee* (1968) quite rightly has a place in many a hipster's record collection, but this hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement.

If truth be told, the early recordings of *400 Miles From L.A. 1955-56*, compiled from recently discovered tapes, previously unheard, may not altogether change that situation. Gathering together demos of songs written when Hazlewood ran his own imprint, Viv Records, from his house, these are rough and ready examples of the songwriter's craft, and the release is clearly aimed at existing aficionados.

That said, the unplugged quality of what's here frequently charms, no more so than on embryonic versions of the songs that would eventually make up Hazlewood's debut album, the melancholy *Trouble Is A Lonesome Town* (1963). These include *Long Black Train, Six Feet Of Chain, Peculiar Guy* and the title track itself.

Less happily, his eternal hustler's optimism meant that even at his considerable peak, Hazlewood couldn't step away from a clever-clever song idea or lyric, and this collection proves this was something present in his music right from the off. As ever with Light in The Attic, this is a beautifully packaged release, especially the deluxe version in gold vinyl, should you have a fair few bucks to spare.

Jonathan Wright

6

Various Artists

JAMBÚ E OS MÍTICOS SONS DA AMAZÔNIA

ANALOG AFRICA

Like so many music cities, state capital Belém in Pará, northern Brazil is a port, both a gateway to the Amazon and a place where Amerinidian, European and African influences coalesce. Yet despite being so open to the world, its cosmopolitan musical heritage has often remained a local affair in terms of finding an audience.

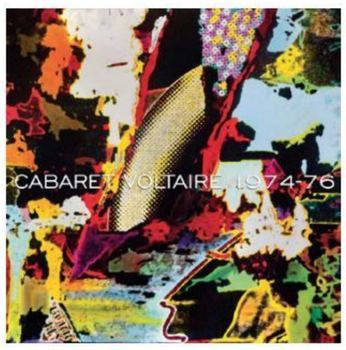
That's lately begun to change. In 2012, Analog Africa founder Samy Ben Redjeb took a trip to the city in the company of DJ Carlo Xavier, an Australian with Brazilian roots, and has now begun bringing the region's music to the wider world. On which subject, this 19-track compilation gathers together tracks drawn primarily from the mid-1970s. If that makes the focus sound narrow, nothing could be further from the truth. The tracks here cover such sub-genres as *carimbó*, *samba-de-cacete* and *siriá* (the nuances are explained in copious sleevenotes), and reflect a vibrant soundsystem culture that saw DJs competing to bring the newest sounds to the region, which often meant Caribbean records first heard on distant radio stations. The unifying theme is these are dance songs that call to mind hot summer nights. Standout tracks? There are many, whether that be the gloriously frenetic guitar work on *Lambada da Baleia* by Vieira E Seu Conjunto, the honking horns of Verequete E O Conjunto Uirapurú's *Mambo Assanhado* or the Latin jazz-inflected *Despedida* by Mestre Cupijó E Seu Ritmo. As befits its port-city roots, it's a compilation that comes across like a jumping-off point for further exploration. *Jonathan Wright*

8

U-Roy
VERSION GALORE
MUSIC ON VINYL

Ewart Beckford aka U-Roy, aka The Originator, was the prime pioneer of toasting, the DJ's art of rapping/rhythmically chatting over the instrumental version (usually the flip-side) of the popular songs of the day. In doing so, he single-handedly changed the musical landscape in his homeland. All cut for Duke Reid's legendary Treasure Isle label, *Version Galore* is one of reggae's milestone releases and gathers up a dozen of U-Roy's highly original interpretations of classic Jamaican chartbusting hits. His wonderfully dexterous vocal style was a major influence on the early rap scene in the US, as witnessed on such gems as The Paragons' *Wear You To The Ball* and Tommy McCook's *Your Ace From Space*. His contribution to popular music may be underplayed, something your vinyl copy of *Version Galore* will not be. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Cabaret Voltaire
1974-76/CHANCE VERSUS CAUSALITY
MUTE



Punk gave Sheffield's Cabaret Voltaire a space in which to operate. Yet, as the first of two archive releases reveals, the Cabs had long been toiling away as a trio, making electronica that was as uncompromising as it was futuristic. Recorded in Chris Watson's attic on a domestic reel-to-reel tape recorder, the tracks on *1974-76* show a band experimenting, yet to develop a power that came in part from confronting hostile audiences. By contrast, *Chance Versus Causality* shows the trio (Watson, Richard H Kirk and Stephen Mallinder) confident enough to improvise a soundtrack LP and imbue it with enough sense of underlying structure to make the project hang together. These early 'works in progress' of an important band are released on transparent orange and transparent green vinyl respectively. *Jonathan Wright* **6**

Shuggie Otis
INSPIRATION INFORMATION
MUSIC ON VINYL

Son of R&B godfather Johnny Otis, Shuggie was a guitar prodigy at a very early age, often wearing a false moustache to play in his dad's band. It was his second solo album for Epic in 1971, *Freedom Flight* (featuring the classic *Strawberry Letter 23*) which put him on the map. This, its 1974 follow-up, sounds contemporary in that it takes its time and creates an atmosphere rather than relying on songs – imagine Sly And The Family Stone doing *Why Can't We Live Together?* Sadly, Otis also took his time making it, and it didn't sell. He was dropped by his label, subsequently disappearing into session musician obscurity. Then, in the late 90s, this was cited as an influence by Prince and re-released on David Byrne's Luaka Bop label. It works much better as two sides of vinyl on this 45th anniversary version, unhampered by any confusing extra tracks. ***Ben Wardle*** **8**

Mono
HYMN TO THE IMMORTAL WIND
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE LTD

First released 10 years ago, a decade into the Japanese post-rock act's career, *Hymn To The Immortal Wind* remains one of the genre's most epic adventures, with its opening track *Ashes In The Snow* a slowly building, gargantuan saga notable for the manner in which a fierce wall of guitars interrupts its orchestral grandeur some three minutes into its 12-minute span. With Steve Albini behind the desk, however, there's an unusually raw edge to Mono's gravity: drums are battered with unusual force, howls of feedback are almost palpable. That said, the windswept romance of *Silent Flight, Sleeping Dawn* might easily be the work of Max Richter, while the fittingly titled *Pure As Snow (Trails Of The Winter Storm)* is as awe-inspiring as the sumptuous, gold-foil stamped packaging of this remastered monolith. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

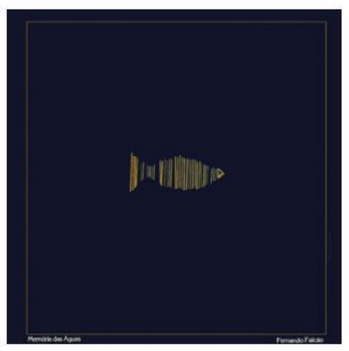
Bunny Wailer
BLACKHEART MAN
MUSIC ON VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

After walking away from The Wailers, the band he formed with his childhood friend Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer launched his own record label, Solomonic. Its first release and his debut solo album was the very wonderful *Blackheart Man*, one of the most intense, ferociously captivating roots albums of the era (or any era come to that). Tosh and Marley both contribute backing vocals, but it's Wailer's soulful, ringing tenor that dominates proceedings. The album established Wailer as a highly original and visionary songwriter in his own right, with his Rastafarian faith charging tracks such as *Fighting Against Conviction*, *Amagideon* and the anthemic *Rasta Man* with a strong conviction. It was the start of a distinguished solo career for Wailer, yet his debut album was a remarkably high benchmark to set and was never bettered. ***Gary Tipp*** **9**

Fernando Falcão
MEMÓRIA DAS ÁGUAS
SELVA DISCOS

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



Released on a limited pressing in 1981, *Memória Das Águas* fetches north of £90 on Discogs. In short, it's a cratedigger's delight. More importantly, it's an extraordinary record, which mixes African and Latin rhythms, jazz-and-psychedelia-tinged melodies and, tempering these warmer sounds, a kind of avant-garde formality. It's all a reflection of the late Falcão's own life, which saw him flee his native Brazil in the late 1960s when the country was under military dictatorship (a bomb was apparently involved). In exile in France, and working as a visual artist and in theatre, Falcão designed his own instruments to become a kind of proto-sound sculptor, which helps explain why the album sounds, even now, so radical. It's re-released along with Falcão's more conventional yet still impressive *Barracas Barrocas*, from 1987. *Jonathan Wright* **9**

Ride

THIS IS NOT A SAFE PLACE
WICHITA

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

After the success of 2017's *Weather Diaries,* Ride's spectacular comeback continues with the band emboldened enough to embrace experimentation. **John Earls** takes it all in

TRACKLIST

1 R.I.D.E.
2 Future Love
3 Repetition
4 Kill Switch
5 Clouds Of Saint Marie
6 Eternal Recurrence
7 Fifteen Minutes
8 Jump Jet
9 Dial Up
10 End Game
11 Shadows Behind The Sun
12 In This Room

You have to feel sorry for bands who get back together after decades apart, only for fans to get sniffy about the prospect of new material. Unless the comeback music is right first time, critics and the public tend to unite in assuming they should have stuck to the old classics. The Stone Roses' second comeback single, *Beautiful Thing,* is much better than *All For One; Head Carrier* by Pixies is a big step-up from *Indie Cindy*. Yet in both cases, the damage was done and "Bog off, grandads!" was generally the unfair rejoinder.

Ride at least got it right two years ago on *Weather Diaries*, their first album since 1996's cursed *Tarantula*. Energetic, psychedelic, epic… it was what you'd hope Ride would sound like. They were helped because, having been openly in thrall to the greats, Ride's was never specifically young people's music in the first place. Which makes the follow-up an even more spectacular album.

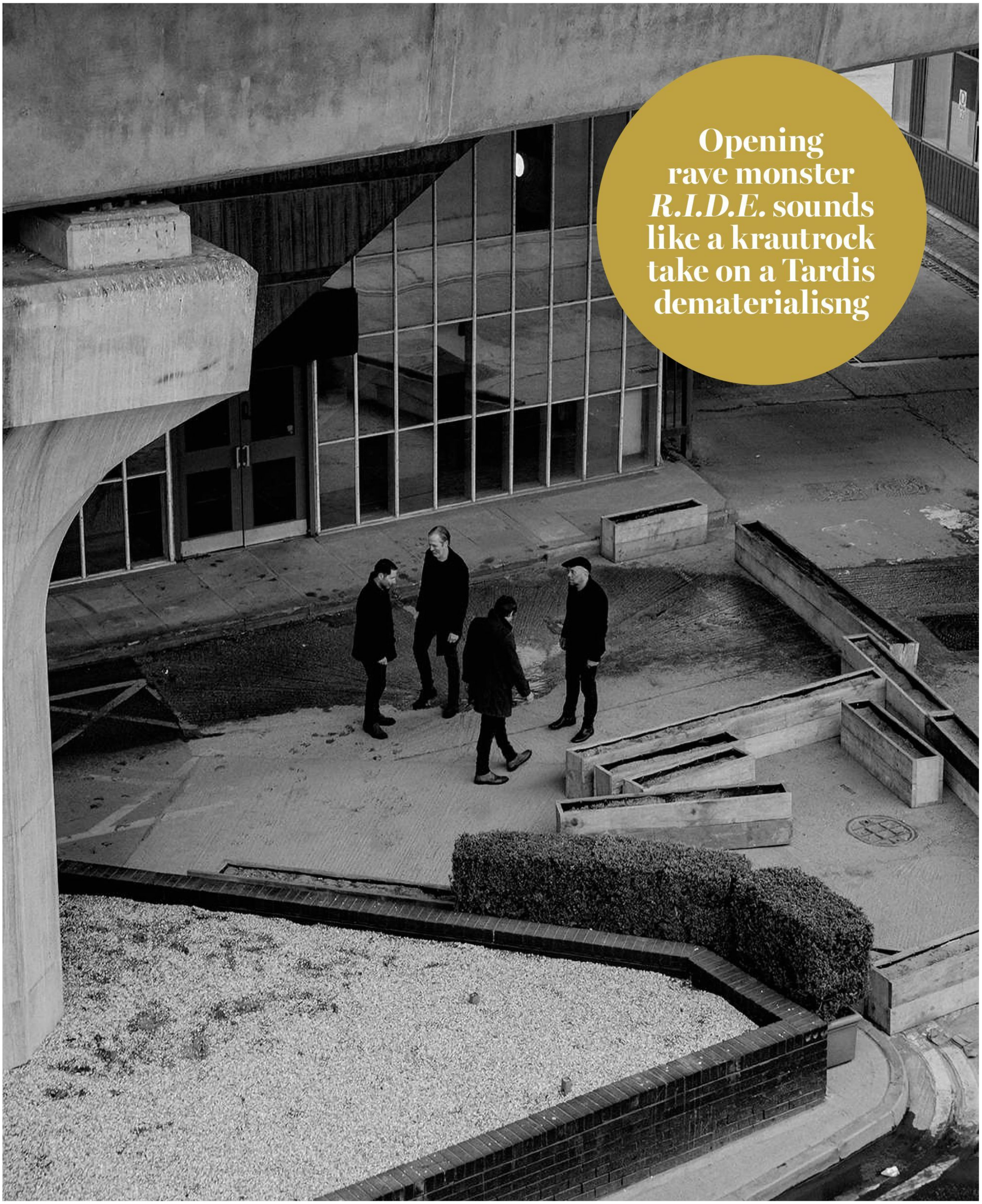
Last month, in an interview, Ride told *Long Live Vinyl* how important 2018's EP *Tomorrow's Shore* was in helping the band become experimental again. That shouldn't be overlooked, because *This Is Not A Safe Place* is best when it sounds nothing like Ride. That's not to dismiss their past: if you want epic psychedelia, Ride have made four great albums and a not-so-great one stuffed with it. What they hadn't done was make music reflecting the breadth of their own record collections. From the opening rave monster *R.I.D.E.* onwards, they do exactly that here. A monstrous whoosh, like a krautrock take on a Tardis dematerialising, *R.I.D.E.* alerts listeners to set aside preconceptions. You may well be familiar with the *Repetition* single by now, another club-influenced banger, only this time with a foot in the pop camp, too, thanks to a stellar chorus.

They're hugely good fun and a new element to Ride's sound – but they're still overshadowed by *Kill Switch*. Already a live favourite, *Kill Switch* is Ride baring their fangs like never before. It's furious, it's not to be messed with, it might just be the best song Ride have ever made.

Of course, there are moments of familiarity. *Clouds Of Saint Marie* and *End Game* do the Ride thing excellently and *Jump Jet* is fabulous woozy pop. But, even when nominally in a comfort zone, don't take Ride for granted. The elegant ballad *Dial Up* is offset by hazily distorted samples of voicemail messages and a burst of a dial-up modem tone at the end.

On the unsettling nine-minute finale *In This Room*, Andy Bell sings: "This is not a safe place to be – you didn't think it was" with exquisite leather-gloved menace. Don't say you haven't been warned. This right here is why bands should reform: just sometimes, experience and the realisation of what they lost first time round make them better than ever.

9



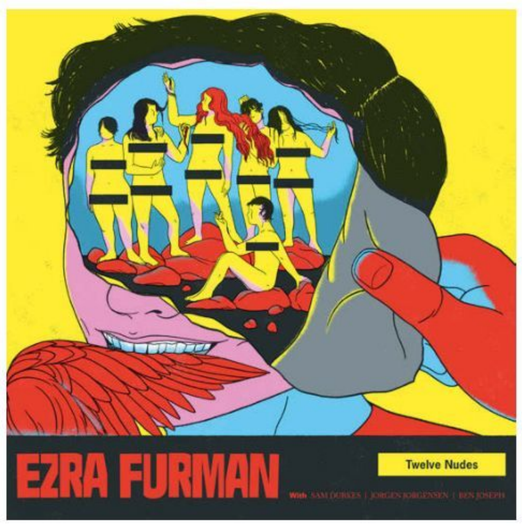
Opening rave monster *R.I.D.E.* sounds like a krautrock take on a Tardis dematerialisng

Ezra Furman

TWELVE NUDES

BELLA UNION

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



Having broken through with 2015's *Perpetual Motion People* and its accompanying joyous festival shows, Ezra Furman's return last year on *Transangelic Exodus* was a little disappointing; he seemed to be second-guessing himself in places and some songs were too precise compared to its predecessor's abandon. That's been brilliantly fixed in quick time. Not only does *Twelve Nudes* arrive rapidly after a relative misfire, the album itself is in a tearing hurry: it's over with in 28 breathlessly intense minutes.

Even more so than *Perpetual Motion People*, *Twelve Nudes* is a thrilling counterpart to Furman's live shows. The opening *Calm Down* sets the tone, a frantic yowl scuzzy with anger and concern. *Rated R Crusaders* and *Thermometer* follow in its wake, before there's room for the aching torch song *I Wanna Be Your Girlfriend*: that it sounds like it's waltzed off the soundtrack to *Cabaret* is all too apt in these times. Anyone who says rock music has stopped making protest songs is talking balls. Play them *Twelve Nudes*. It won't take long and you can howl along deliriously to *Trauma* and *In America* while you're at it. On the heartbreaking power-pop closer *What Can You Do But Rock 'n' Roll?*, Furman sings: "The kind of sex you want is the kind they'd like to make illegal." And once the forces of hatred currently thriving are done with that, you can bet they'll come for rock & roll as sulphuric and illicit as *Twelve Nudes*. Choose between red or yellow vinyl, but be sure to choose at least one of them. ***John Earls***

9

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

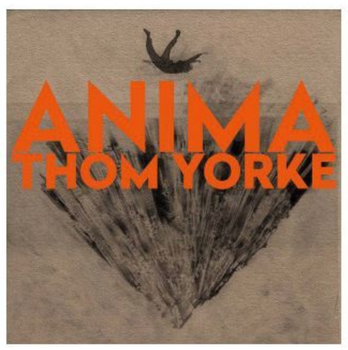
INFEST THE RATS' NEST

FLIGHTLESS

Trying to predict where King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard are going to go with their next record, or how many of them are going to be released in a year, has been a futile task for some time now. However, of all the avenues the band have been down in recent years exploring garage, psych, prog and experimental rock, few would have guessed they'd ever end up here. *Infest The Rats' Nest* is, to all intents and purposes, a metal record. It's loaded with spitfire drums, monster riffs, guttural vocals and thumping bass that at times resemble peak-era Motörhead. It's much more heavy and thrash metal territory than some of the more extreme takes on the genre, so it feels accessible, melodic even at times (*Mars For The Rich* is both stomping and rollicking in all its riff-soaked glory). For those who came to King Gizzard on the back of the blues-tinged glam stomp of 2019's earlier album *Fishing For Fishies*, they may be finding the Australians exploring their sharpest musical contrasts to date. Although for those who have been tapped into the frenetic garage-psych-rock of the band from the early years, this may not feel like too much of a weird side step (think more Pigs x7 than Mayhem). The most satisfying element, however, is that King Gizzard clearly don't care one way or the other; they are following their instincts, having a riot and making an absolutely blistering racket along the way. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

7

Thom Yorke
ANIMA
XL RECORDINGS



Just like 2014's *Tomorrow's Modern Boxes*, Yorke's latest release often sounds incomplete, but what *Anima* lacks in immediacy it certainly compensates for with atmosphere. On *Dawn Chorus*, for instance, he intones his lines, bereft of hope, his accompaniment no more cheerful, but the tune blossoms gently on the back of genuinely striking imagery. Similarly, *Twist*'s disembodied samples of yelling children make it unsettling, but simultaneously match the sweetness of Yorke's falsetto. *Traffic*'s heavy dub, meanwhile, echoes through dark spaces, its mood made more sinister by eerie refracted vocals; but there are also moments of what may be humour, not least in the title of *I Am A Very Rude Person*, whose swirling effects provide a curious comfort. *Anima* offers enough substance besides to make Yorke's electronica more than an indulgence. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **7**

Sleater-Kinney
THE CENTER WON'T HOLD
MOM + POP

The throbbing electronics and clattering industrial rhythms that open Sleater-Kinney's latest LP suggest a stark shift in tonal direction for the band. However, by the end of the song, as fuzz-drenched guitars erupt, backed by driving drums, the band re-enter more familiar territory. It's a fiery and ferocious opening to a record that never quite returns to such tones but does offer as many surprises. Elsewhere, it's an altogether slicker, more pop-touched, electronic and smoother affair. St Vincent's production feels distinctly present but not overbearing, instead guiding the band into a new era that uses the lyrical backdrop of the female body to explore tumultuous times via music that can often be as unpredictable as the troubled times we are living in. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **8**

Violent Femmes
HOTEL LAST RESORT
PIAS

A mere 10 albums in and Violent Femmes continue to be one of America's most distinct alternative underground artists; sitting somewhere in that territory between Pixies, Royal Trux and Meat Puppets, their latest album, as many of them do, haphazardly traverses punk, country, folk and alt-rock, and is driven by the inimitable, and often wonky, vocal of the semi-legendary Gordon Gano. On the album's title track, the band have enlisted the skills of Television guitar maestro Tom Verlaine, who adds shimmering and snaking guitar parts to the country-tinged stomp. It's an unpredictable and restless listen, rarely sitting still for a moment, but Gano's handy knack for a hook and a melody is still present, as is his innate ability to explore off-kilter rhythms and unusual song structures on an album that stands up with the band's finest. ***Daniel Dylan Wray*** **7**

The SLP
THE SLP
COLUMBIA

Kasabian songwriter Serge Pizzorno goes solo, having fun throwing out sampledelic rockers (*Youngest Gary*), disco bangers (*Nobody Else*), menacing funk (*The Wu*), spaghetti Western (Slowthai duet *Meanwhile At The Welcome Break*) and a couple of more traditional straight-up aggro moments (*Lockdown*, *Soldiers 00018*). They're all undeniably excellent tunes… but you can't help wondering how Kasabian's endlessly charismatic singer Tom Meighan would have fared singing them. Pizzorno is a decent vocalist but, unlike his songwriting, he doesn't quite step up a gear here. There's a lot to admire, as few songwriters have as much breadth of imagination, and the grooves pay off. Yet you can't help wondering if some of it should have been saved for Pizzorno's day job. *John Earls* **7**

Fionn Regan
CALA
ABBEY RECORDS

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Irish singer-songwriter Fionn Regan's sixth album is named after the Spanish word for cove, and it shimmers and glints with all the sun-flecked splendour of a Balearic evening. *Head Swim* is the kind of sparing delight purists will yearn for Justin Vernon to make again, while on *Riverside Heights* Regan emotes over "The sand dunes and the stars, the moon is a tambourine". He dips a toe into ambient electronica on the title track and *Glaciers*, without sacrficing the air of blissful quietude that hangs over the whole 35-minute set. *Brass Locket*, meanwhile, finds him Stateside, beholding the Hudson River, Tennessee and the Catskills. Regan's fingerpicked guitar playing is exquisite throughout and the songs are blessed with the expert lightness of touch possessed by a writer once nominated for the Mercury Prize. ***Gary Walker*** **9**

New Model Army
FROM HERE
EARMUSIC

There's often been a degree of snobbery directed towards Bradford's New Model Army, but *From Here*, their 15th album, is an impassioned collection that refutes every inherited prejudice detractors might offer, and also explains why 2016's *Winter* was their highest-charting album in over two decades. Their style remains a gritty variation on 'Big Music', with *The Weather* recalling Thin Lizzy as much as early-90s U2 wannabes This Picture, while *Setting Sun* suggests Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds were they to try their hand at folk. *End Of Days* is suitably apocalyptic, and opener *Passing Through* particularly intense, its guitars growling slowly towards a stormy climax, while *Watch And Learn* is full of menace as noisy as The God Machine's. The pounding title track closes the album with righteous fury. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

P.P. Arnold

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF...
P.P. ARNOLD
EARMUSIC

Alongside her long-term collaborator Ocean Colour Scene's Steve Cradock, *The New Adventures Of...* finds the evergreen P.P., the former backing vocalist for Nick Drake, the Small Faces and others, credibly replicating the big-hearted, big-voiced, big-souled warmth of her two late-60s classics. Opener *Baby Blue* sounds so excited that it initially appears to be double speed, while the euphoric *The Magic Hour*, the gospel-flavoured *I Believe* and piano-led *Still Trying* all possess that distinct Motown feel, as does her take on Paul Weller's pastoral *When I Was Part Of Your Picture*. There's also an intense jazz-funk reading of Bob Dylan's *Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie*, and a stirring choral elegy to her late daughter, *I'll Always Remember You*. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **8**

Barns Courtney

404
VIRGIN/EMI

You might not know Barns Courtney's name, but you'll probably know his songs *Glitter And Gold* and *Fire* from a host of sync spots on TV. He deserves to be known properly, as his music has the big personality to match Courtney's flamboyant, Brandon Flowers-style vocals. He's from Cambridgeshire, but is bigger in the States, where he's regularly performed on chat shows. Small wonder there's a confidence and brashness to *London Girls* and *Fun Never Ends,* which makes him resemble Kings Of Leon more than current indie timidity. *Boy Like Me* is a huge ballad drawn from the closing scenes of an 80s Bratpack film, and if Courtney hasn't quite mastered subtlety yet (*Babylon* doesn't suit him at all), there's still plenty for indie-disco fans and TV sync dealers to get excited about. *John Earls* **8**

The Futureheads

POWERS
NUL RECORDS

It was 14 years ago that The Futureheads were enjoying fleeting chart success with *Hounds Of Love*. After leaving major label 679, they continued to make their unique blend of stridently layered vocals and guitars, until signing off with 2012's acoustic covers album, *Rant*. Then… silence. If you've heard the signature riff on towering single *Jekyll,* you'll appreciate how relevant they now sound in 2019 on this, their sixth album: Brexit, mental illness and 30-something angst loom large on a record which can stand proud alongside more fashionable newcomers IDLES, Fontaines D.C. and Shame. There's also a pervasive seam of wit and irony which runs through this record, helping it avoid po-faced social commentary: "When did we all shrink so small? Why do we all think so small?" sings Barry Hyde on *Listen, Little Man!* It's good to have them back. *Ben Wardle* **7**

!!!

WALLOP
WARP

At the start of the '00s, perennially un-Googleable Californians !!! capitalised on the short-lived punk-funk revival, with their lively *Louden Up Now* album briefly making them festival favourites. They're much less likely to play stadiums now, but !!! have quietly got on with it: remarkably, *Wallop* is their eighth album. It's unlikely to win back many fans who have lost touch, with too many songs losing focus and allowing potential hooks to shimmy away among some sloppy jams. But there's still a goofy determination to party on *Off The Grid* and *UR Paranoid*, featuring Maria Uzor of Norwich's Sink Ya Teeth, which means you can't help hoping there's a festival slot for them somewhere. They're badly in need of a good edit, they're still pronounced "Chk chk chk" and album nine will doubtless be along soon. Fair play. ***John Earls*** **6**

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHOP

FOREVER RECORDS
NOTTINGHAM

B Boys

DUDU
CAPTURED TRACKS

We have loved the B Boys for a while, but this new album just blows away their previous work. It's an energetic instant album of complete bangers mixing early Wire, Fugazi and Talking Heads. If you like your post punk angular and catchy, this is for you. This has got to be our album of the summer.

Gauche

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF GAUCHE
MERGE

Gauche deserve to be bigger than they are, we are suckers for the punk-funk/No Wave sound, but Gauche do it better than most. This new record is a summery blast of post-punk pop. The band features Daniele Yandell (Priests) and Mary Jane Regalado (Downtown Boys). It's a sax-filled dance party.

Sarathy Korwar

MORE ARRIVING
LEAF

It's been a great couple of years for the UK jazz scene and Sarathy Korwar brings something unique with his new record, a blend of Jazz with spoken word, hip-hop and Indian classical to create something vibrant and important: a message for Broken Britain. It talks honestly about where we are as a country, it's political and incisive, and feels like a record that really needs to be heard.

Blanck Mass
ANIMATED VIOLENCE MILD
SACRED BONES

There's little subtlety to the electronic music of Blanck Mass man and one half of Fuck Buttons, Benjamin Power. This is intense and heady – throbbing bursts of, by turns, anxiety and euphoria-inducing industrial electronica. It hits hard and frequently and the tempo is high and often frantic, like being locked inside an ever-evolving nightmare that also sounds like a wild film or game soundtrack. Aside from the relentlessly pummelling electronics, Power also works in some black-metal esque vocals that add to the intensity and power of his work. At times, it's an overwhelming listen; a sensory overload that attacks you from every angle, but it's clear that Power is making electronic music that is representative of the times: there's no hiding from what is encroaching all around us.
Daniel Dylan Wray

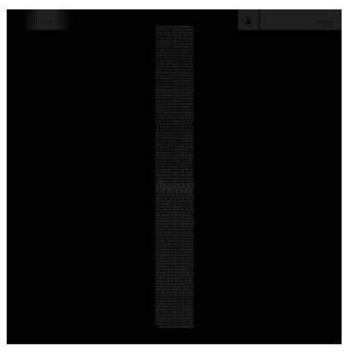
7

Velvet Negroni
NEON BROWN
4AD

The latest stage moniker of Minneapolis-based Jeremy Nutzman, Velvet Negroni makes music equally rooted in commercial R&B and the experimental territory more normally associated with 4AD releases. It's a mix that reflects both Nutzman's own background: a black child adopted by a white evangelical family, he studied classical piano but was drawn to late-night jam sessions, and a career that has encompassed touring with Bon Iver, and being sampled by Kanye West and Kid Cudi for their *Kids See Ghosts* project. Whatever the balance of influences here, the result is an album underpinned by sparse and spectral beats, and which slowly insinuates itself into the consciousness. It's impressive, with stand-out tracks including opener *One One* and melancholy lead single *Confetti*. *Jonathan Wright*

7

Föllakzoid
I
SACRED BONES



Across four tracks, two at 17 minutes and two at 13 minutes, there's a neatness and pleasing symmetry to Chilean psych outfit Föllakzoid's latest. This is often mirrored in the music itself, with steady driving drum beats that ring out endlessly and waves of guitars that glisten in echo-laden infiniteness, but there's also a joyous sense of the unknown and the impulsive on the record. Stretched out to such lengths, these tracks feel more like inhabiting landscapes than simply existing as songs. The gently brooding electronics, motorik rhythms, and immersive atmospheres all combine to give the feeling of stepping into the great unknown, a voyage that is as trippy as it is ambient, and as tense as it is relaxing. Unlike past records, that were done in single takes, this record took three months to construct. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

8

Shura
FOREVHER
SECRETLY CANADIAN

Alexandra Denton's second LP offers an example of 'normalisation', but one used to foster acceptance, not prejudice. With shards of Barry White-like strings penetrating its appealing gloss, *Religion (U Can Lay Your Hands On Me)* reveals her lover is female, while *Flyin'* insists casually "Be my woman, babe" as it effortlessly shifts between Supertramp verses and soulful Janet Jackson choruses. The slick, serene *Control* also celebrates "my got to be girl", but these are blink-and-you'll-miss-them moments, her central narrative otherwise as ordinary as her 80s-influenced pop is extraordinary. That we even need to acknowledge her sexuality is disappointing, but to ignore this would sweep aside how refreshingly unaffected *Forevher* actually is.
Wyndham Wallace

8

"Terms of Surrender is part apology, part plea, part love letter," says Hiss Golden Messenger bandleader MC Taylor of his latest album. "It's about how much of the most important parts of ourselves we can sacrifice and still feel like we're living the life that we thought we wanted." It's an album that documents a tumultuous year and subsequent redemption. Taylor stretched out of his Durham NC base to record with Aaron Dessner of The National in New York, at Sound City in LA and in Nashville with the aim of making, "a wandering record". "I wanted where we recorded it to mirror the searching spirit of the music," he says.

Hiss Golden Messenger
TERMS OF SURRENDER
MERGE

MC Taylor's impecible musical heritage elevates this latest entry in a catalogue now in double figures. While Phil and Brad Cook are again present, Taylor has broadened his horizons, inviting outside influences. Among the expanded roll call is The National guitarist Aaron Dessner, and *My Wing*'s central riff bears a resemblance to the Ohio band's *This Is The Last Time*. Jenny Lewis, meanwhile, adds breathy undertones to the rootsy *Old Enough To Wonder Why*. *Whip*'s howling harmonica and cooking blues guitar provide grit, while there's often familial remorse among the gospel and soul, not least on the sweet title track and *Happy Birthday Baby*, on which Taylor apologises to his daughter for "all these miles that I roam". Southern class again shines brightly. *Gary Walker*

8

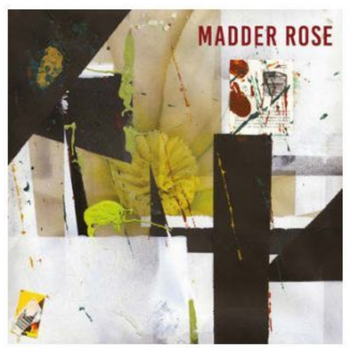
Babybird
PHOTOSYNTHESIS
RW/FF RECORDINGS

Not content with releasing what seems like an album a month via his Bandcamp page, Stephen Jones now issues his first album on vinyl in 21 years. Unlike this year's earlier CD release, *Happy Stupid Nothing*, it's comprised of unreleased material, but his formula remains familiarly simple: loop a melancholic musical phrase for the verses, another for the chorus, and a third for a bridge, while constructing a straightforward but haunting melody whose lyrics capture one of life's quietly transcendent moments. *Beach Grave* launches into its chorus with particular vigour, while *No Cameras* opts for a more skeletal approach and *Yeah I'm In Hollywood* aims straight for the heart. There are surprises, too, among them *Too Late*'s sudden bursts of rattling drums, and *Black Friday Jesus Tuesday*, an instrumental worthy of a top-notch 90s chillout compilation. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **8**

Tropical Fuckstorm
BRAINDROPS
FLIGHTLESS

After releasing one of 2018's best albums in *A Laughing Death In Meatspace*, this Australian outfit made up of former members of the Drones drop a quick follow-up. Sadly, it doesn't quite have the magic the debut did. The same humorous and often brilliant lyrics, half-spoken on top of screeching guitars, erratic bursts of drums, and jagged-edged rhythms exist here, but the more melodic side of the debut is replaced by a lot more experimental and often meandering atonal guitar parts. It struggles to lift off in quite the same seamless way as its predecessor; it's harder work, but that hard work doesn't often pay off. *Braindrops* is a stranger, more awkward record that at times captures the manic energy of a band like Deerhoof, but sometimes its fidgety mania can be to its own detriment. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **6**

Madder Rose
TO BE BEAUTIFUL
TROME RECORDS



Much lauded in their early years for mixing the wide-eyed purity of Mary Lorson's voice and the languorous fuzz of Billy Coté's guitars, New York's Madder Rose later lost their way exploring electronic distractions, before splitting at the end of the century. This fifth album teased for a while, happily recalls the mellowest portions of 1994's *Panic On. To Be Beautiful*'s hushed restraint is interrupted by shards of cavernous guitars, and tracer trails of high-pitched notes punctuate the airy *I Don't Know How To Love You*, which also receives a more skeletal, droney reinvention at the album's end. *Roses*, too, is as sparse as it is affecting, while *Bye Love*'s warmth belies its sorrowful outlook, and *On Dit Adieu* masks its grief in French. No wonder the album's subtitled *Pretty Songs About Death, With Noise*. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **8**

Jay Som
ANAK KO
LUCKY NUMBER

There's a deceptively polite quality to the music of Jay Som, aka Melina Duterte. Reaching back to the indie stylings of Cocteau Twins, The Sundays and, from a slightly later vintage, Slowdive, Duterte writes songs that have a surface prettiness. Her DIY leanings – she records at home – add to an initial sense of being in the presence of someone not exactly shouting about their abilities. Listen again, though, and *Anak Ko* ("my child" in Filipino) conveys the sense of an artist trying to talk intimately to her audience. That said, the best moments come when she explores gnarlier sounds – the guitars on *Superbike* or, coming across like a dream-pop Julia Jacklin, the pedal-steel stylings of *Get Well*. It's pressed on red, orange and pink splatter or, a Rough Trade exclusive, cloudy clear vinyl. *Jonathan Wright* **7**

Clark
KIRI VARIATIONS
THROTTLE RECORDS

Chris Clark's 10th album offers a reminder of not only his ongoing urge to explore new territory, but also multiple styles within a single record. It's closer to 2016's *The Last Panthers* OST than 2017's *Death Peak*, which is perhaps unsurprising given it was developed from his work on director Euros Lyn's 2018 drama, *Kiri*. What is surprising, however, is his decision on *Cannibal Homecoming* to sing, though his natural vocal is embedded among other treated voices and distorted sounds. Elsewhere, he's subtly indebted to Brian Eno. *Simple Homecoming Loop* quietly echoes *Discreet Music*, and *Forebode Knocker* and *Tobi Thwarted* recall the more experimental and peaceful extremes of his ambient work. *Banished Cannibal*, meanwhile, presents peaceful strings Max Richter would approve of. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **8**

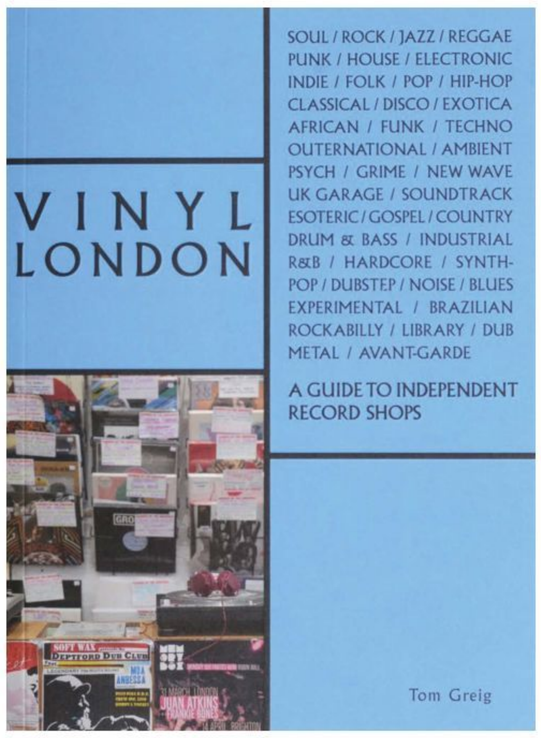
Whitney
FOREVER TURNED AROUND
SECRETLY CANADIAN

The falsetto vocals of singing drummer Julien Ehrlich have a deceptively loose style that calls to mind the Americana of The Band, and songs on close nodding terms with soft rock from the 1970s. The essential components of Whitney songs were established with debut *Light Upon The Lake* (2016) and, essentially, not too much has changed on this sophomore effort. Which, down the line, might become a problem, but mostly isn't here, as tracks such as *Giving Up*, *Used To Be Lonely* and *Song For Ty* are carried by the band's easy way with a pop melody. An album to play on Indian Summer picnic days then, but a little more bite, such as offered by the trumpet part on instrumental *Rhododendron*, would be welcome next time around. Available in Forest Brown vinyl. *Jonathan Wright* **7**

Vinyl London

TOM GREIG

ACC ART BOOKS £15



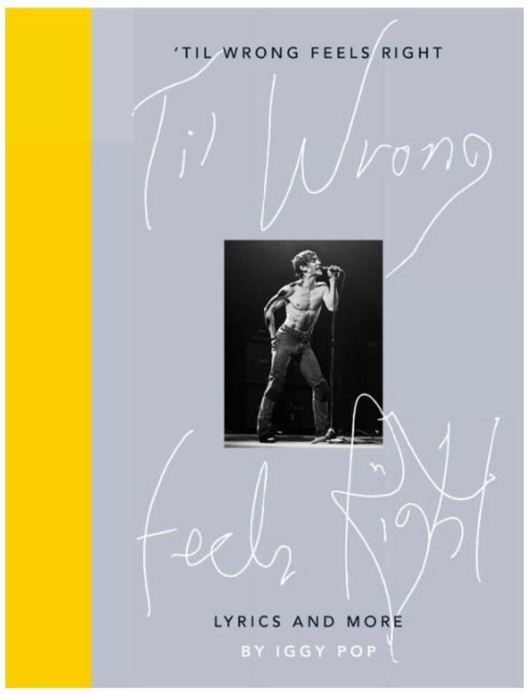
If you're the type of vinyl head who is happy enough to enter a record shop just to look at the albums on the wall, then this is the book for you. Tom Greig's excellent *Vinyl London* works on a couple of levels. First and foremost, it is a well-written reference guide for anybody with a couple of bob in their back pocket, who fancies splashing out on a record or two. Each shop is categorised by its vinyl speciality and whether it stocks new or old vinyl, together with the address and URL. Particularly handy is a map that divides London up into six different regions (Soho, North, South, East, West, Suburbs). *Vinyl London* also works as a visual snapshot of the capital's vinyl scene and timestamps the diverse and unique culture that revolves around it. Credit here must go to photographer Sam Mellish, whose elegant snaps have a satisfying knack of capturing the in-store ambience. As Greig says: "The physical record shop, like the physical vinyl format, has intrinsic value." We couldn't agree more. ***Gary Tipp***

9

Til Wrong Feels Right

IGGY POP

PENGUIN £25



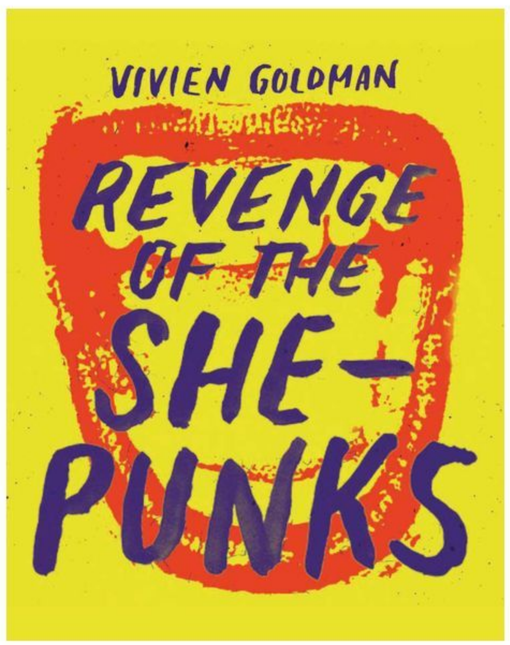
Coinciding with the 50-year anniversary of The Stooges' *The Stooges*, Iggy finally receives the selected lyrics treatment. It's well deserved, as the man also known as James Newell Osterberg is a much under-estimated songwriter who is more than capable of expressing himself through the muscular poetry of his lyrics. As he scrawls in this book's intro about his words: "They came on foot, horseback, in an Eldorado, by motorcycle; staggering, gun to my head, gun in my belly, needle in my arm, joint in my mouth, pills in my bloodstream, but no matter how they got here, they did the fucking job." Most collections of this ilk tend to present the lyrics as they would the works of a respected poet, all restrained typography, clipped margins and white space. Appropriately enough, *Til Wrong Feels Right* does nothing of the sort. The lyrics are incorporated into the artwork, which, in turn, provides an exciting contextual backdrop. It's a simple enough trick, but it serves Iggy and his words well. *GT*

8

Revenge Of The She-Punks

VIVIEN GOLDMAN

OMNIBUS PRESS £14.95



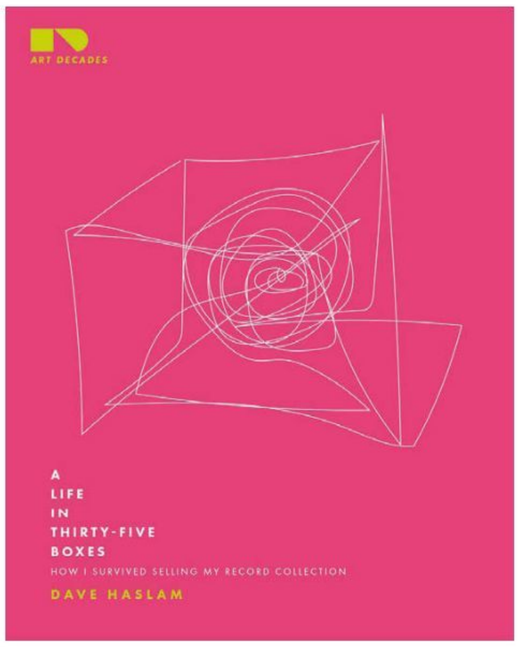
With 90s riot grrrl bands Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney both touring again to packed houses, the timing of Vivien Goldman's *Revenge Of The She-Punks* seems pretty much spot-on. Subtitled *A Feminist Music History From Poly Styrene To Pussy Riot (*is it me or are subtitles getting longer and longer these days?), Goldman's latest treatise explores and chronicles the 'Women in Rock' narrative from the punk perspective. Having been Bob Marley's publicist and Generation X's manager in a previous life, as well as singer in post-punk minimalists The Flying Lizards, Goldman is particularly well placed to give an insider's view. Nowadays, the 'Punk Professor' lectures at New York University, and while the book occasionally takes on a lofty academic tone, it's never at the expense of being totally impenetrable. Goldman also links every chapter to a carefully chosen Spotify playlist so you can listen along as you read. While this may sound like one of those unnecessary marketing affectations, it actually works suprisingly well. *GT*

7

A Life In Thirty-Five Boxes

DAVE HASLAM

CONFINGO PUBLISHING £7.99



In this fascinating yet slim volume, Dave Haslam, the broadcaster and former Haçienda DJ, recounts the time he flogged his 4,500-strong vinyl collection. It may sound like the ultimate act of sacrilege to many of our readers, but it certainly wasn't a decision that Haslam took lightly, and he shares his rationale with us via no small amount of soul-searching.

Throughout the book, he explores the nature of collecting and the strong emotional value an 'enthusiast' can attach to a box-load of wax. Subtitled *How I Survived Selling My Collection,* for Haslam it was all about letting go, and the moment he waved goodbye to the 35 boxes of records as they were loaded into the back of a van proved to be one of great catharsis. Not just a personal account, he also introduces us to other cratediggers with exceptional collections, such as Daniel Soutif, whose stash of rare jazz is beyond compare. If, however, you find the notion of selling your own record collection makes you more than a little queasy, we recommend you proceed with caution. ***GT***

7

DREAM MACHINES

McIntosh
MTI100 INTEGRATED TURNTABLE

£7,945 mcintoshlabs.com

An all-in-one deck, preamp and amplifier with Bluetooth and auxiliary inputs. Just add speakers

This rather stunning, high-end home audio system from McIntosh features vinyl playback and HD music streaming over Bluetooth, plus an amplifier.

The belt-driven MTI100 is powered by an AC-synchronous motor with a two-speed pulley that plays both 33⅓ and 45rpm. The chassis includes a Class D, 50W power amplifier, a valve preamplifier section (with two 12AX7 valves), shielded phono preamplifier, Bluetooth receiver, stereo speaker outputs and a headphone jack (powered by McIntosh's High Drive headphone amp).

The stylish unit is reassuringly solid – the platter on its own weighs 3.18kg with a machined-aluminium construction. There's a matching tonearm and a 9.5mm-thick piece of glass on the plinth. This sits on a custom 6.35mm-thick metal plate.

1 MOVING MAGNETS
The MTI100 comes supplied with a Sumiko Olympia Moving Magnet cartridge

2 IN CONTROL
Power, volume and input selection can be controlled by either the included remote or via two knobs on the unit

3 NAME IN LIGHTS
An illuminated McIntosh logo is located on the top glass panel, while a McIntosh-styled die-cast aluminium name badge can be found on the front

Out of the box, the AXA35 looks understated and suitably elegant for an affordable amp

Cambridge Audio AXA35

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

£299 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge Audio's new amp is a great all-rounder at a nice price, as **John Pickford** attests

Cambridge Audio is one of the better-known names in UK hi-fi – and with good reason; they've been producing excellent-quality stereo equipment for over 50 years. The new AXA35 integrated amplifier is part of their entry-level AX range, which also includes a line-level amplifier with no built-in phono stage, and a (cough) CD player. Although the Cambridge brand is well known for its affordable audio gear, they do offer plenty of scope for upgrading, with their flagship Edge A integrated amp costing a pound shy of four and a half grand. For those of us who aren't in the market for sound systems with five-figure price tags, the £299 AXA35 offers fantastic bang for buck.

Conventionally sized with a stylish, modern design, the amp does away with the four clunky feet usually found at the base of products such as this, instead using traditional round feet at the rear of the unit only. The front support is built into the unit to present a classy front profile that belies the amp's modest price.

The front panel features a display screen showing the selected input source, volume level, balance adjustment and tone controls. Underneath are push buttons to select four line-level sources as well as, crucially, the phono input. Stereo connectors for these inputs are exactly where you would expect to find them, on the back panel. Also on the front panel is a large rotary dial to adjust volume, as well as stereo balance and treble/bass settings. A headphones socket is provided to connect a pair of cans with a 1/4-inch jack plug, while a mini jack input allows for the connection of an external audio device.

Adjacent to the source inputs on the rear panel are stereo phono Rec Out connectors, which enable a recording device such as an old-skool cassette deck to be connected; mixtapes are so much more fun to compile than Spotify playlists. There is also a USB

A quick peek around the back reveals that the AXA possesses a comprehensive range of inputs

power socket to charge and maintain power for external equipment such as streaming devices and Bluetooth adaptors. It's here on the rear panel that the AXA35 reveals its budget status. The RCA inputs are basic, no gold-plated audio jewellery here, while the loudspeaker terminals are plastic screw-in types that accept bare wire but not banana plugs.

As my reference turntable uses a cartridge costing more than three times the price of the AXA35, I opt to connect one of my trusty Technics 1210s, which I retain for the occasional DJ gig. Most decent, affordable modern turntables should produce comparable sound quality.

Fresh from the box, with a short period of warm-up, I think it appropriate to test the 35-watt amp by spinning one of the few tunes from my DJ days that also serves as a hi-fi test track, The Beatles' *Come Together*. This song is driven by Paul McCartney's undulating, swampy bass and Ringo Starr's damped, thudding tom-toms. Feeding a pair of Q Acoustics' excellent 3010i bookshelf speakers, I nevertheless anticipate a rather weak-kneed presentation of the recording's bottom end, so it's surprising to hear a bass response that's both agile and quite deep. OK, this isn't earth-shaking bass nor as nuanced as I am used to experiencing through my reference gear, yet it is astonishingly good for the power and price.

JUDICIOUS USE OF THE TONE CONTROLS WILL ADD WARMTH TO THE AMPLIFIER'S SONIC CHARACTER

Moving up the frequency spectrum, the broad midrange and treble region is a little stark, shining a spotlight on John Lennon's vocal and making him sound slightly sibilant. Easing off the treble by -2dB smooths things out nicely, and while I'm adjusting the tone I find a 2dB boost to the bass usefully adds some body and punch to the low midrange and upper bass. I settle on this setting for the remainder of the audition period, though other sources and speakers connected to the AXA35 will likely inspire alternative adjustment. Lean and sprightly in nature, judicious use of the tone controls will add warmth to the amplifier's sonic character.

It wasn't so long ago that the quality of sound offered by this latest low-cost amp from Cambridge would've been available only at a much steeper price. The foothills of the hi-fi mountain are now, more than ever, a wondrous place.

VERDICT

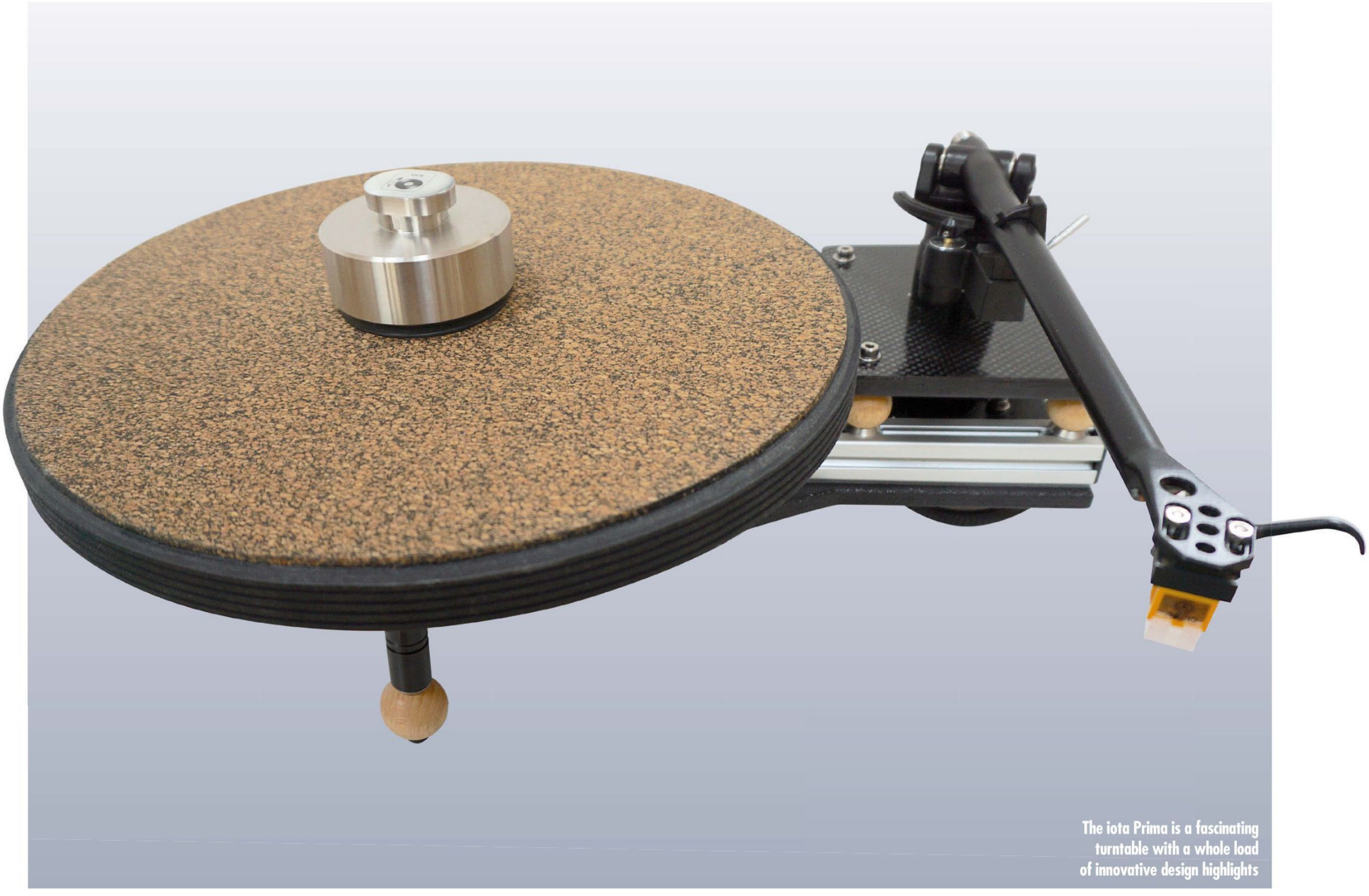
PROS

- EXCELLENT SOUND PER POUND
- SNAPPY, RHYTHMIC PERFORMANCE
- DECENT MUSICAL INSIGHT
- BASS AND TREBLE TONE CONTROLS
- REMOTE CONTROL

CONS

- WILL NOT ACCEPT TERMINATED SPEAKER CABLES

9



The iota Prima is a fascinating turntable with a whole load of innovative design highlights

iota Prima

TURNTABLE

£1,295 (TURNTABLE) + £325 (UPGRADED TONEARM) 07706 306918 www.iota-audio-design.com

Presented with a fresh approach to turntable design, **Paul Rigby** reviews the iota Prima

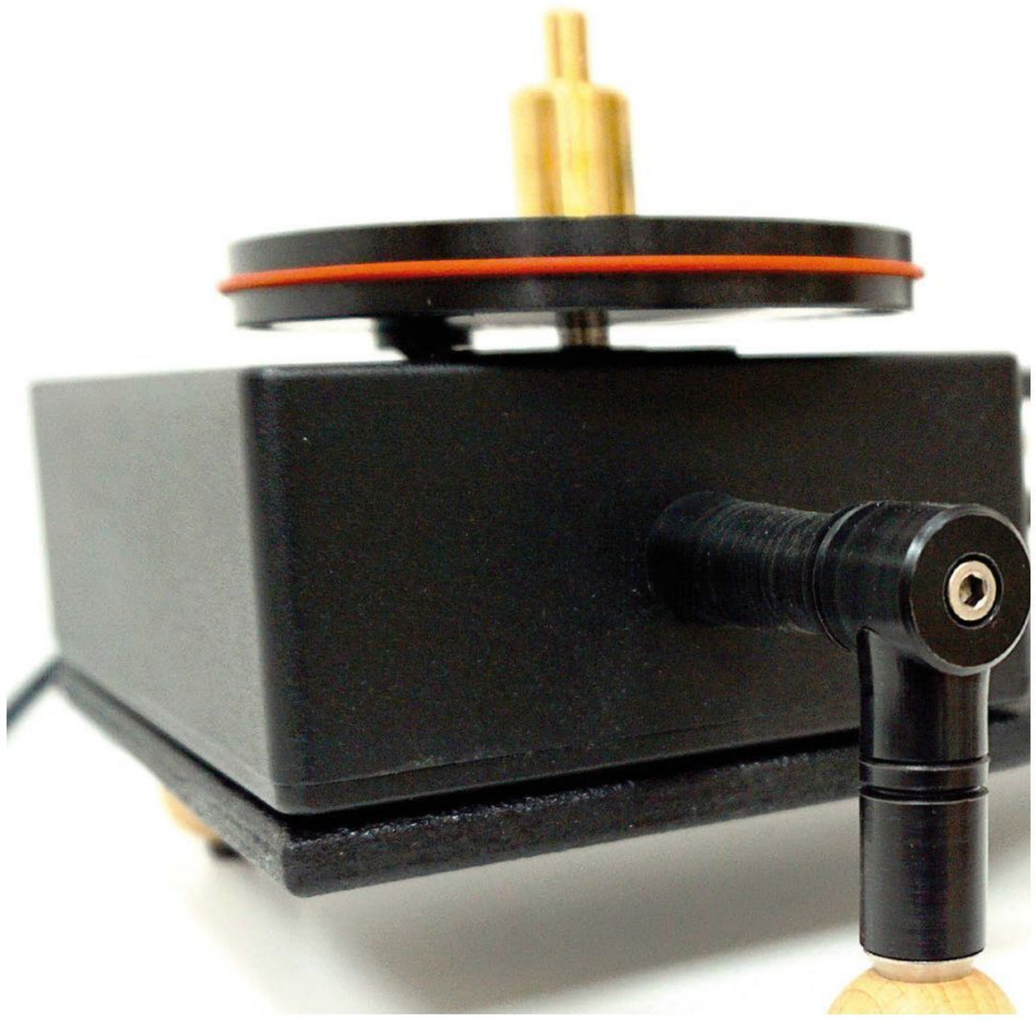
Before you even load up this turntable with vinyl, spin the platter and let it rip, you will be totally intrigued, if not fully enamoured, by the build of the Prima. Some will love the rather industrial approach, others will be less keen on the somewhat harsh lines and brutalistic girder-like plinth.

I'll say this, though, it's different. And vive that particular difference, I say. Many turntables currently spinning around the market look all too similar. So good on iota for daring to be different and mixing materials as far apart as birch wood and steel, ABS and MDF. It's a startling construction and one that is the key note to the Prima.

Even the belt is a little different from the rest, a silicon-nitrile example and small with it. iota love the sonic personality from the belt, although they do warn that it's not the stickiest belt in the world, so it doesn't grab the platter as hard as other examples. Hence, when starting up, you might want to give the platter an encouraging push. I didn't find the need to do that, I must add. You might, though.

Speaking of the belt, you move it across pulley grooves to change the speed. There are two standard speeds on this deck: 33 and 45. The turntable can take Rega-style arms, but talk to the company if you want something else and they'll sort you out. The arm boards feature the carbon fibre, plus birch ply, beech hardwood for damping and stainless steel spacers and fittings.

Sitting alongside the turntable is an external mains-filtered power supply called the MFP1 (you can upgrade to a digital synthesis model with speed control for £400). To support the 24-pole AC synchronous motor, this extruded aluminium power unit uses a multi-stage



filtration system, double shielded and star-earthed with a separate fuse protector. There's a rocker power switch on the front and IEC power socket and turntable socket on the rear. It's rated at 250W.

When you put the platter onto the chassis, you'll notice the bonded layer on the top of the platter itself; that's a combination of cork and nitrile rubber. I approve, put it that way. Cork is great, the cork/rubber combo is better and reduces veiling noise.

Under the platter is a bearing with a brass sleeve mounted on an acetal outer brush with a polished stainless steel bearing shaft upon a Grade 5 silicon nitride ceramic ball. Synthetic oil acts as a lubricant.

The sub-platter that supports the belt is constructed from ABS with bonded carbon fibre and polymer damping.

The tonearm is a modded RB220 known as the QT, featuring Cardas wiring inside, plus a Ground wire and upgraded cartridge tags and RCA Neutrik RCA or XLR plugs. A straight or right-angled SME/Jelco plug can be fitted on request instead.

You can buy this arm as new or send your old Rega arm to the company and they will upgrade it for you. A freely swinging, rather innovative counterweight called a SwingWeight is at the rear; there to enhance sound quality, it also improves tracking on warped records.

I played a mixture of prog rock and jazz vocal and found the turntable offered a neutral and balanced output with an excellent, deep-set soundstage. Bass was present in spades but never swamped the soundstage. The evenly apportioned detail meant that even shy and subtle effects could be heard easily, with a high level of midrange insight that was fascinating. A typical vocal delivery sequence, for example, was smooth yet provided a host of information in terms of diction, along with nuanced elements such as the amount of effort applied to certain words.

Treat this turntable right, with proper isolation support and good quality shelving, and the iota Prima will repay you well. There's plenty of thought behind this design. You're not looking at a typical 'manufactured' deck here. More importantly, the spacious midrange and massy bass with a naturalistic soundstage layout will draw you in and keep you fixed to your chair.

9

THERE'S PLENTY OF THOUGHT BEHIND THIS DESIGN. YOU'RE NOT LOOKING AT A TYPICAL MANUFACTURED DECK

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
ORGANIC BASS	NOTHING
CLARITY	
SOUNDSTAGE LAYOUT	
NEUTRAL PRESENTATION	

By 1971, Marvin Gaye was sick of love songs and wanted to write about the realities of the world around him, as **Gary Tipp** discovers

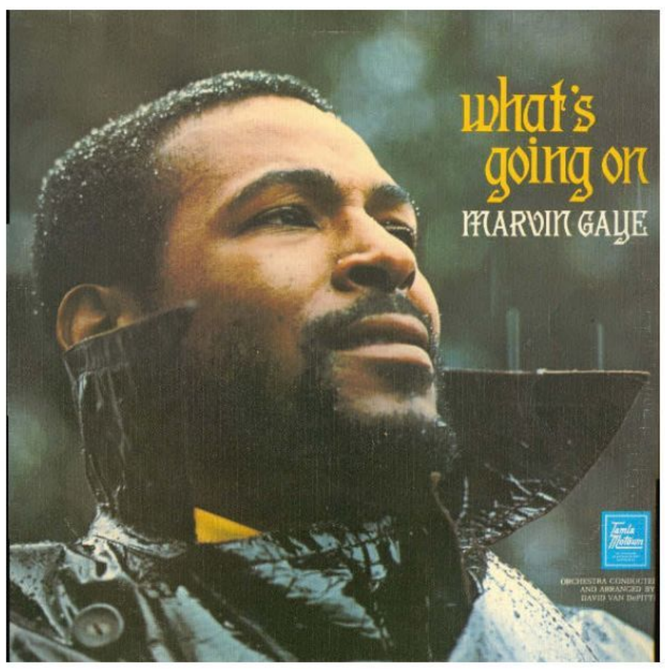
The closing track of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, his 11th and most enduring album, is the climax of an ambitious song cycle. *Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)* depicts the emotional effects of urban deprivation and decay on its residents. It is a heavy song on a landmark soul album that the Motown superstar had to fight hard to get recorded.

The first time Motown supremo Berry Gordy Jr heard the title track of *What's Going On*, he took an instant and profound dislike to it. In fact, not one for understatement, he even went as far as saying it was "the worst thing I ever heard in my life".

The majority of Motown's famed Quality Control Department team also turned the song down, with executive Harry Balk subsequently explaining that, "they were used to the 'baby baby' stuff, and this was (initially) a little hard for them to grasp." Gordy also believed the song was way too political to be a hit and too unusual to be commercially successful.

As a man increasingly affected by the social ills plaguing the US at the time, his brother's stint in Vietnam had taken a toll ("With the world exploding around me, how am I supposed to keep singing love songs?"). Gaye found the courage of his convictions and responded by going on strike, vowing to never record for the label again.

Gordy eventually relented, but only after the track became Motown's fastest-selling single at the time after been released as a 45, to all intents and purposes, behind his back. Upon learning of its success, the chastened Gordy drove to Gaye's home to discuss making a complete album, promising him he could do what he wanted with his music if he finished the record within 30 days, effectively giving him the right to produce his own albums.



IN THE GHETTO

Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler) was written by Gaye, together with frequent collaborator James Nyx Jr. It depicts the ghettos and bleak economic situations of inner-city America and the hopelessness of the people living there.

In 1998, Nyx Jr. recalled, "Marvin had a good tune, sort of blues-like, but didn't have any words for it. We started putting some stuff in there about how rough things were around town. We laughed about putting lyrics in about high taxes, because both of us owed a lot. And we talked about how the Government would send guys to the moon, but not help folks in the ghetto. But we still didn't have a name, or really a good idea of the song. Then, I was home reading the paper one morning, and saw a headline that said something about the 'inner city' of Detroit. And I said, 'Damn, that's it, *Inner City Blues*'."

Legendary Motown house band The Funk Brothers provided the end cut's mellow groove, but it's Gaye's transcendent vocals that give the song its raw, emotional power.

Nearly 50 years on and Gaye's prescient lyrics about inequality and injustice ('Crime is increasing/ Trigger happy policing') still carry the weight of relevance today. ●

"They were used to all the 'baby, baby' stuff. This was hard to grasp"

GEMS/REDFERNS

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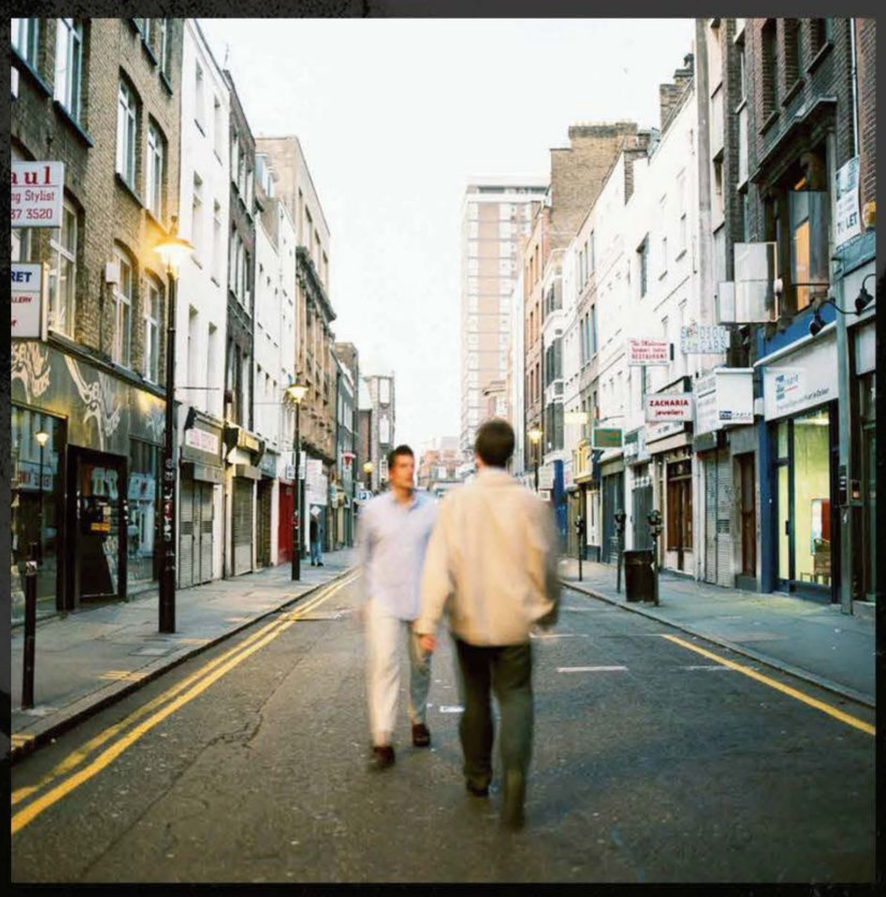

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